LONG LIVE VINYL

ANGEL OLSEN
"I'M SOMEONE WHO CARES ABOUT DETAIL"

ISSUE 35
FEBRUARY 2020
£6.99

DJ SHADOW
"I'VE NEVER STOPPED COLLECTING"

COURTEENERS
"WE NEED TO KEEP ON OUR TOES"

NEW GEAR FOR 2020
BUILD YOUR IDEAL HI-FI SETUP

59
NEW REVIEWS!
LEE SCRATCH PERRY, PET SHOP BOYS, KEELEY FORSYTH, SUPERGRASS, STORMZY, WIRE, FRANK ZAPPA, FELA KUTI

SECRETLY CANADIAN
INSIDE AMERICA'S COOLEST LABEL

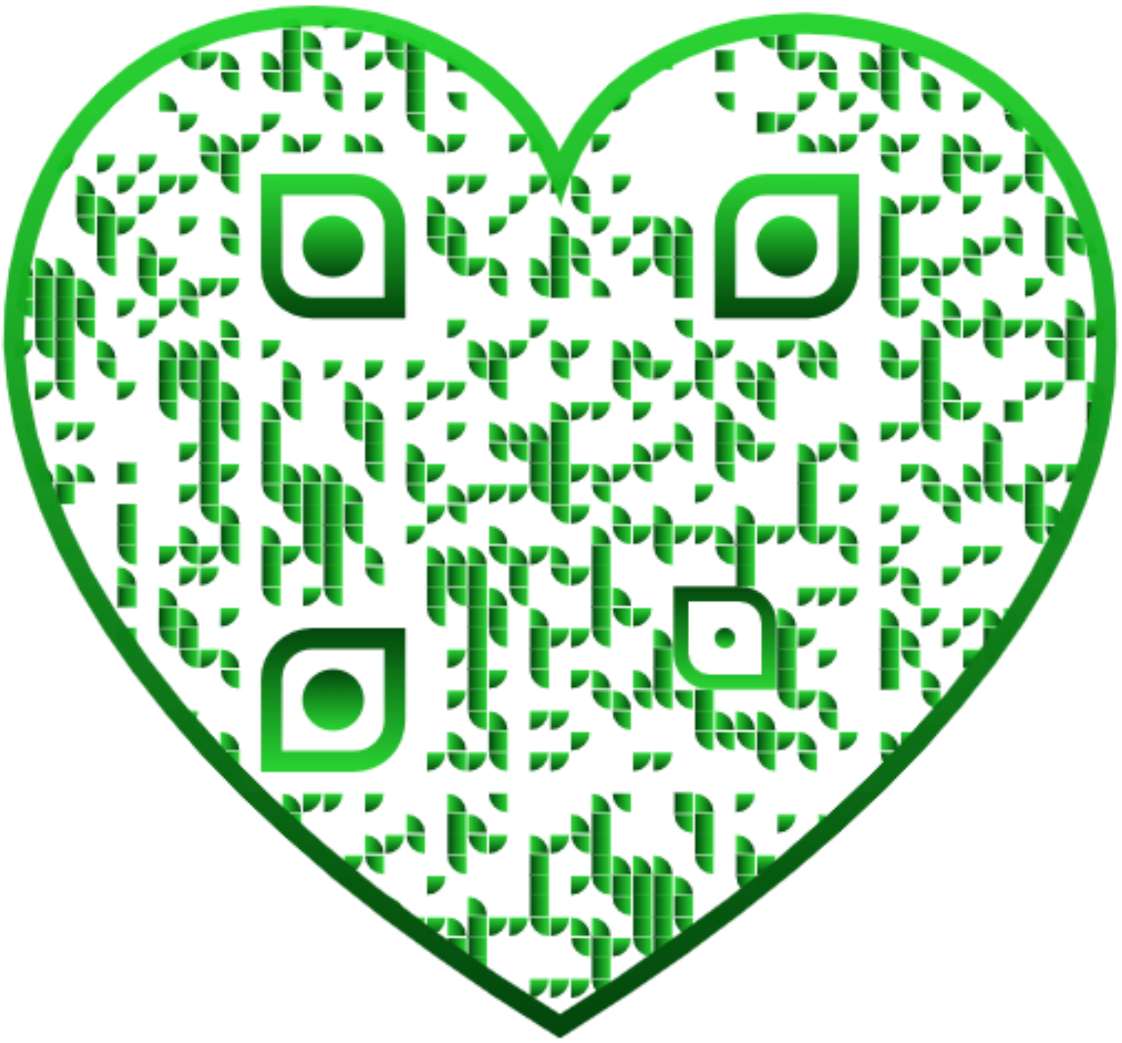
ESSENTIAL FOLK ROCK
40 CLASSIC ALBUMS YOU NEED TO OWN

THE MAGAZINE FOR VINYL LOVERS

ANTHEM
ISSUE 35
FEBRUARY 2020
PRICE £6.99
35 >
9 772398 911015

DYLAN

1970–79 A DECADE OF REINVENTION
EIGHT ALBUMS THAT REDEFINED A GENIUS



[PIAS] ACTION PRESTON • BADLANDS CHELTENHAM • BANQUET KINGSTON • BEATDOWN NEWCASTLE • BLACK CIRCLE LEIGHTON BUZZARD • BEAR TREE SHEFFIELD • CASBAH GREENWICH • COOL DISC DERRY • CRAS
PROBE LIVERPOOL • RAPTURE WITNEY • RAVES FROM THE GRAVE FROME • RECORD CORNER GODALMING • REFLEX NEWCASTLE • RELEVANT CAMBRIDGE • RESIDENT BRIGHTON • ROLLERCOASTER KILKENNY •
H LEEDS • CULT HERO BRIGHTON • DAVID'S LETCHWORTH • DIVERSE NEWPORT • DRIFT TOTNES • EARWORM YORK • ECLIPSE WALSALL • ELEPHANT WINCHESTER • ELSEWHERE MARGATE • EMPIRE ST ALBANS • FIVES LEIGH ON SEA • FOREVER NOTTINGHAM • FREEBIRD DUBL
ROUGH TRADE BRISTOL - LONDON - NOTTINGHAM • SEISMIC LEAMINGTON SPA • SISTER RAY LONDON • SLIDE BEDFORD • SMUGGLERS DEAL • SOUNDCLASH NORWICH • SOUND IT OUT STOCKTON ON TEES • SOUND KNOWLEDGE MALBOROUGH • SOUNDS OF THE UNIV
ANSMISSION MARGATE • TRUCK STORE OXFORD • UNDERGROUND SOLU SHN EDINBURGH • UNION MUSIC LEWES • VENUS VINYL LONDON • VINYL HUNTER BURY ST EDMUNDS • VINYLO SOUTHAMPTON • WAH WAH RECORDS WAKEFIELD • WORLD OF ECHO LONDON
RTLAKE • LOST IN VINYL CAMBRIDGE • MOLD RECORD SHOP MOLD • MONORAIL GLASGOW • MUSIC NOT DEAD BEXHILL • NORMANS LEEDS • PEBBLE EASTBOURNE • PHONICA LONDON • PICCADILLY MANCHESTER • PIE & VINYL SOUTHSEA • POLAR BEAR BIRMINGHAM
IN • FRIENDLY BRISTOL • GATEFIELD SOUNDS WHITSTABLE • GATEFOLD HITCHIN • HONEST JONS LONDON • JAM FALMOUTH • JUMBO LEEDS • LEFT FOR DEAD SHREWSBURY • LET IT ROLL CAMDEN • LEVEL CROSSING MO
ERSE LONDON • SOUTH SOUTHEND • SPILLERS CARDIFF • SPINDIZZY DUBLIN • SQUARE WIMBORNE • STRANGER THAN PARADISE LONDON • SWORDFISH BIRMINGHAM • TALLBIRD CHESTERFIELD • TOWER DUBLIN • TR

THE INNOCENCE MISSION
SEE YOU TOMORROW
Bella Union

PALE SAINTS
THE COMFORTS OF MADNESS
30TH ANNIVERSARY REMASTER
4AD Records

FIELD MUSIC
MAKING A NEW WORLD
Memphis Industries

SQUAREPUSHER
BE UP A HELLO
Warp

DAN DEACON
MYSTIC FAMILIAR
Domino Records

ALICE BOMAN
DREAM ON
Play It Again Sam

POLICA
WHEN WE STAY ALIVE
Memphis Industries

FEDERICO FELLINI & NINA ROTA
LA DOLCE VITA/LA STRADA
Chant Du Monde

GEORGIA
SEEKING THRILLS
Domino Records

DESTROYER
HAVE WE MET
Dead Oceans

YORKSTON / THORNE / KHAN
NAVARASA : NINE EMOTIONS
Domino Records

BILL FAY
COUNTLESS BRANCHES
Dead Oceans

SAVE MONEY
WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE!
TURN TO PAGE 8

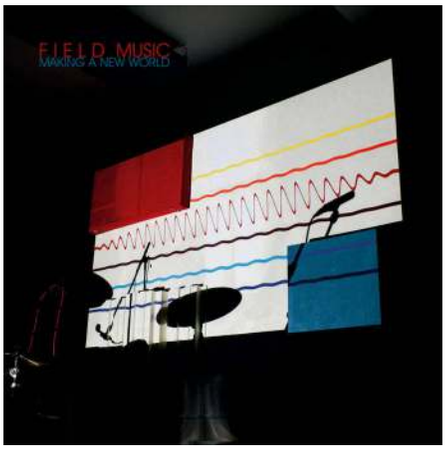
Welcome...

Which is the most played record in your collection? The one whose weathered grooves and battered sleeve tell the greatest stories of heavy rotation and late-night companionship. I wouldn't have to hesitate in answering that question. It's *Blood On The Tracks*, the album which made me a hopeless Bob Dylan obsessive. It wasn't the first Dylan record I bought, that was *The Freewheelin'…*, but to my mind it's the best. I still remember the day I took it to the counter of Badlands in Cheltenham before wobbling home on my bike, running up to my bedroom, putting on my headphones and diving deep into this world of intoxicating heartbreak. *Tangled Up In Blue* twisted my teenage mind, dulled as it was by a diet of Oasis and Blur albums, Dylan seemingly warping time and space, elevating a classic boy meets girl tale into something transcendental. Fishing boats outside Delacroix, 13th century Italian poets, carpenters' wives and revolution in the air… it's one of the most evocative songs ever written. And he didn't stop there. *Simple Twist Of Fate* and *Shelter From The Storm* are simple distillations of all-consuming romanticism of the most sorrowful kind; *Idiot Wind* one of the rawest takedowns ever committed to tape; *You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go* and *If You See Her Say Hello* the sounds of a man yearning desperately for his departed love… You get the message, I love *Blood On The Tracks*. Yet, Dylan being Dylan, it's only a small fragment of the story. Arriving in 1975, it was one of eight studio albums Bob unleashed in the 1970s – 10 if you include the label-driven *Dylan* and *The Basement Tapes*. And they're all wildly different, soundtracking a decade of turmoil and transience for the world's best songwriter. From the ropey *Self Portrait* via the heady, violin-adorned swirl of *Desire* to the MOR revival on *Street-Legal* and God-bothering *Slow Train Coming*, Dylan travelled a vast distance in the 70s. It's a fascinating story, and we've rounded up some of Bob's most trusted lieutenants and bandmates this month to recount the tale. So put on your favourite Dylan record of his most intriguing decade and immerse yourself in their stories. Happy new year and thanks for reading.

Gary Walker *Editor*

LONGLIVEVINYL

ALVAN MEYEROWITZ/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY CAMERON McCOOL



RYAN PFLUGER

LONG LIVE VINYL

COVER STORY

DYLAN IN THE SEVENTIES 50
A decade of reinvention saw Dylan redefine himself as an artist of rare, exceptional genius

FEATURES

DJ SHADOW 30
On his brooding, post-apocalyptic double album *Our Pathetic Age*

ANGEL OLSEN 36
The devil is to be found in the detail for this outrageously talented singer-songwriter

COURTEENERS 42
The Mancunian rockers set out on a new path

FIELD MUSIC 46
The thinking behind the band's concept album

CLASSIC ALBUM
MORRISON HOTEL 60
A return to form for The Doors

ESSENTIAL
BRITISH FOLK ROCK 66
The genre's brightest lights on vinyl

LABEL STORY
THE SECRETLY GROUP 74
Secretly Canadian. Jagjaguwar. Dead Oceans. America's coolest label group

TALKING SHOP
STRANGE VICTORY RECORDS 80
Belfast's most switched-on vinyl emporium

BOOK EXTRACT
VINYL COUNTDOWN 84
Choice words from Graham Sharpe's book

HI-FI SETUPS 88
Build the perfect system for you in 2020

NEWS

ON THE RECORD 10
The latest news, views and opinions, including:

SIMON SAYS 13
Simon Raymonde of Bella Union

THE COMPLETIST 15
Also known as Pete Paphides

LINER NOTES 17
Ian Peel goes prog

REGULARS

WHY I LOVE 26
Folky fiddler Seth Lakeman first discovered Randy Newman in his dad's record collection

10 QUESTIONS FOR...
ROBERT FORSTER 28
The former Go-Between provides the answers

DIGGING FOR VICTORY 79
Mark O'Shaughnessy takes his curtain call

CHOICE CUTS 86
An ültra-rare Mötley Crüe collectable

CLOSER 114
Pink Floyd's psychedelic whimsy, *Bike*

REVIEWS

ALBUMS
REISSUES & COMPILATIONS 96
The latest re-releases & boxsets

NEW RELEASES 102
The pick of this month's new albums

GEAR
DREAM MACHINES 108
A prime loudspeaker from Wilson Audio

REVIEWS 110
A new turntable from Pro-Ject, plus a fresh take on an iconic amp from Naim

SAVE MONEY WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE!
TURN TO PAGE 8

LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team's favourite 70s Dylan records

GARY WALKER
Blood On The Tracks

GARY TIPP
The Basement Tapes

TILDA HOWARD
Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid

ANDY McGREGOR
Desire

IAN PEEL
Street-Legal

Meet our expert contributors…

SIMON RAYMONDE
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins; he's currently in Lost Horizons. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

JOHN EARLS
In addition to writing about music for *Classic Pop*, *NME* and *The Daily Star*, John Earls was editor of Teletext's Planet Sound for a decade. He also writes about football, spends too much time on Twitter and is delighted that his new hometown in Bedfordshire has a decent record shop. There's even a bus that goes to Luton Town's ground, so his life is essentially sorted.

JONATHAN WRIGHT
Jonathan began writing about music in the late 80s. He's interviewed such singular talents as Shaun Ryder, Edwyn Collins and Richey Edwards. He's written for *The Guardian*, *Classic Pop* and many others. Jonathan edited *Adventure Rocketship! Let's All Go To The Science Fiction Disco*, a book of essays about the interface between geek culture and music.

DANIEL DYLAN WRAY
Daniel is a freelance writer based in Sheffield. He writes for *The Guardian*, *VICE*, *Pitchfork*, *Uncut*, *The Quietus*, *Noisey* and several others. He will be forever poor because he spends too much money on records. He can be found playing said records in Sheffield, often making small children cry by playing Einstürzende Neubauten on a Sunday afternoon in a pub.

PETE PAPHIDES
Pete bought his first record at the age of nine and has been a vinyl obsessive ever since, while writing for *Melody Maker*, *Q*, *Mojo*, *Time Out*, *The Times* and *The Guardian*. He is one of the UK's best known music journalists and has also written and presented documentaries for BBC Radio 4 and BBC 6 Music. You can catch him on Soho Radio every Tuesday, 12-2pm.

Anthem Publishing
Piccadilly House,
London Road, Bath BA1 6PL
Tel **+44 (0) 1225 489 984**

Editor **Gary Walker**
gary.walker@anthem-publishing.com

Creative Director **Jenny Cook**
jenny.cook@anthem-publishing.com

Art Editor **Andrew McGregor**
andy.mcgregor@anthem-publishing.com

Founder & Editor At Large **Ian Peel**
ian.peel@anthem-publishing.com

Production Editor **Gary Tipp**

Digital Assistant **Tilda Howard**

Contributors
Glen Bushell, Garth Cartwright, John Earls, Cara Gibney, Steve Harnell, Rob Haywood, Jason Kennedy, Mark O'Shaughnessy, Pete Paphides, Chris Parkin, John Pickford, Simon Raymonde, Paul Rigby, Felix Rowe, Teri Saccone, Wyndham Wallace, Ben Wardle, Daniel Dylan Wray, Jonathan Wright

ADVERTISING
Advertising **Chris Cope, Sean Leslie**
chris.cope@anthem-publishing.com
sean.leslie@anthem-publishing.com

COVER IMAGE
Camera Press / Lynn Goldsmith

ANTHEM PUBLISHING
Managing Director **Simon Lewis**
simon.lewis@anthem-publishing.com
CEO **Jon Bickley**
jon.bickley@anthem-publishing.com
Head Of Marketing & Production
Verity Travers
verity.travers@anthem-publishing.com

LICENSING
Regina Erak *regina.erak@globalworks.co.uk*

PRINT & PRODUCTION
Print **William Gibbons & Sons Ltd**
Tel **+44 (0) 1902 730011**
Distributed by **Marketforce (UK) Ltd**
5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf,
London E14 5HU
Tel **+44 (0) 20 378 79001**

ANTHEM PUBLISHING

All content copyright Anthem Publishing Ltd 2019, all rights reserved. While we make every effort to ensure the factual content of *Long Live Vinyl* magazine is correct, we cannot take any responsibility nor be held accountable for any factual errors printed. Please make every effort to check quoted prices and product specifications with manufacturers prior to purchase. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or resold without prior consent of Anthem Publishing Ltd. *Long Live Vinyl* magazine recognises all copyrights contained within the issue. Where possible, we acknowledge the copyright holder.

ppa The Professional Publishers Association Member

All paper used in this publication comes from responsibly managed forests

FSC MIX Paper from responsible sources FSC® C013669

SPECIALIST MUSIC AUCTIONEERS

WE ARE THE NO. 1 AUCTION HOUSE WORLDWIDE FOR VINYL
& THE FASTEST GROWING FOR MEMORABILIA
THE BEST PLACE TO SELL YOUR COLLECTION

OMEGA AUCTIONS

14TH JANUARY 2020
HEAVY ROCK, METAL & PROG

28TH JANUARY 2020
THE TONY PRINCE COLLECTION PART I

The first part of the legendary radio DJ's life lifetime collection of vinyl and memorabilia, to include the first Beatles record ever to have been played on radio.

14TH JANUARY 2020
PUNK, INDIE, & NEW WAVE, INCLUDING JAM & STYLE COUNCIL COLLECTION

FEBRUARY 2020
MUSIC MEMORABILIA

FEBRUARY 2020
RARE & COLLECTABLE VINYL RECORDS

COMING SOON… First Beatles record ever to have been played on radio!

REGULAR SPECIALIST AUCTIONS OF RARE & COLLECTABLE VINYL AND MUSIC MEMORABILIA PLUS ONE OFF SPECIALIST SALES

IF YOU ARE LOOKING TO SELL A SINGLE ITEM OR ENTIRE COLLECTION OUR NO. 1 PRIORITY IS TO ENSURE YOU GET THE BEST POSSIBLE PRICE

GENRES INCLUDE ROCK, PROG, PSYCH, INDIE, PUNK, ROCK N ROLL, JAZZ, FOLK, BLUES, NORTHERN SOUL, SOUL, DISCO, MOTOWN, FUNK & MORE TO INCLUDE LPs, 7", 12", ACETATES, DEMOS, POSTERS, PROGRAMMES, TICKETS, STAGE CLOTHING, INSTRUMENTS, AWARDS, SIGNED ITEMS, PHOTOGRAPHS, PERSONAL EFFECTS, DOCUMENTS AND MORE…

WE ACCEPT CONSIGNMENTS WORLDWIDE

Omega Auctions, Sankey Valley Industrial Estate, Newton-Le-Willow, WA12 8DN
Tel: 01925 873040 | www.omegaauctions.co.uk | Email: office@omegaauctions.co.uk

SUBSCRIBE TO LONG LIVE **VINYL**

Yes! I would like to subscribe to Long Live Vinyl magazine

☐ *£14.99 every 3 months by Direct Debit – **SAVE 28%***

YOUR DETAILS

Title Forename Surname

Address

Postcode

Tel no**

Email**

**Please enter this information so that Anthem Publishing Ltd can keep you informed about your subscription. You may unsubscribe from these messages at anytime.

Anthem Publishing Ltd, publisher of Long Live Vinyl, would like to keep you up to date with news, events, special offers, and occasionally request feedback from you, Please tick the relevant boxes to indicate how you would like to be contacted. You can choose more than one ☐ Email ☐ Telephone ☐ SMS ☐ No thanks

DIRECT Debit

INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY DIRECT DEBIT

Originator's Identification Number

8 3 7 1 8 1

1 Name of your Bank or Building Society

2 Name of account holder(s)

3 Branch sort code

☐☐☐☐☐☐

4 Account number

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

5 Instruction to your Bank/Building Society Please pay Anthem Publishing Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Anthem Publishing and if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank or Building Society.

Signature(s) Date

DIRECT DEBIT GUARANTEE

Direct Debit is only available in the UK. If you're not entirely satisfied with *Long Live Vinyl* at any time during your subscription, you can cancel it and receive a refund for any unmailed copies.

SEND YOUR COMPLETED FORM TO

FREEPOST ANTHEM PUBLISHING

Yes, its that simple. No address or stamp required.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR INTERNATIONAL READERS – YOU CAN SAVE TOO!

☐ ***Europe*** *continuous credit card - €29.99 every 3 months (Save 26%)*

☐ ***Australia*** *continuous credit card - $37.99 every 3 months (Save 25%)*

☐ ***USA/Canada*** *continuous credit card - $34.50 every 3 months (Save 25%)*

☐ ***Rest of World*** *continuous credit card - £22.99 every 3 months*

PLEASE DEBIT MY CARD:

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Maestro ☐ American Express

Card no ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐

Valid from ☐☐ ☐☐ Expiry date ☐☐ ☐☐ Issue no ☐☐

Signature Date

OFFER CODE PAGE

Your subscription will start with the next available issue. Long Live Vinyl is published 12 times per year. Saving based on UK cover price, and is only available to subscribers paying by Direct Debit or continuous card payment. All other savings are off the local cover price, and are available to customers in the UK, Europe, Australia and North America only.

YOUR SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

- SAVE 28% ON THE SHOP PRICE
- **JUST £14.99 BY DIRECT DEBIT**
- NEVER MISS AN ISSUE
- **FREE DELIVERY DIRECT TO YOUR DOOR**

INTERNATIONAL DELIVERY RATES YOU CAN SAVE TOO!

USA/CANADA
$34.50 every 3 months

EUROPE
€29.99 every 3 months

AUSTRALIA
$37.99 every 3 months

REST OF WORLD
£22.99 every 3 months

SAVE 28% WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE

SAVE 28%

ORDER NOW!

ORDER ONLINE AT
LONGLIVEVINYL.NET/SAVE28

BY PHONE
+44 (0)1371 853 609

BY POST
COMPLETE THE FORM OPPOSITE
(UK ONLY)

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal, providing you various content: brand new books, trending movies, fresh magazines, hot games, recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price
Cheap constant access to piping hot media
Protect your downloadings from Big brother
Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages
Brand new content
One site

AVXLIVE.ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open https://avxlive.icu

On the record

2020 Vision

A new year can only mean one thing, more new albums. Here's a quick preview of 10 LPs to look out for in 2020

The year ahead looks all set to be another great one for vinyl, if the latest crop of album announcements is anything to go by. Here's a sneaky peak at 10 releases in the early part of the year that we're already hotly anticipating…

1 **Tame Impala, *The Slow Rush*, February**
Kevin Parker follows up *Currents* with the much-awaited *The Slow Rush*. Recorded in his own studio in Freemantle and Los Angeles, the album was written, recorded and produced by Parker all on his lonesome.

2 **Jonathan Wilson, *Dixie Blur*, March**
The Topanga Canyon-based songwriter opted for a change of scenery and a fresh approach on his seventh studio album. Recorded in Nashville, Wilson assembled a killer band full of local talent for what he describes as his most emotional record yet.

3 **Shabaka & The Ancestors, *We Are Sent Here*, March**
As if Sons Of Kemet and The Comet Is Coming weren't enough, the hard-working Shabaka Hutchings hits the racks with the first Ancestors album since 2016.

4 **Baxter Dury, *The Night Chancers*, March**
Ian Dury's grown-up nipper recorded his new collection of tunes at Hoxa studios in West Hampstead.

5 **Stephen Malkmus, *Traditional Techniques*, March**
The former Pavement man goes back to basics with his most stripped-back album to date. Out on Domino.

6 **Nadia Reid, *Out Of My Province*, March**
Now signed to Spacebomb, New Zealander Reid returns for her eagerly-awaited follow-up to 2017's acclaimed *Preservation*.

7 **M. Ward, *Migration Stories*, April**
The plaintive songwriter serves up another slice of folky Americana on the ANTI- label.

8 **Søren Lorensen, *Lake Constance*, April**
This Aqualung/Goldfrapp collaboration is named after the creepy imaginary friend in kids' TV show *Charlie & Lola*. Author Lauren Child was on hand to provide the artwork.

9 **Michael Head & The Red Elastic Band, *New Brighton Rock*, Summer**
The Shack man has been recording in Bill Ryder-Jones' studio in West Kirby – it's a tantalising prospect.

10 **Rolling Blackouts Coastal Fever, *TBC*, Summer**
The Melbourne five-piece's forthcoming release on Sub Pop follows hot on the heels of the critically acclaimed debut *Hope Downs*.

Discogs TRENDING CHART

THE TOP 10 TRENDING VINYL RELEASES FROM THE DISCOGS COMMUNITY THIS MONTH

10 *Live Frogs* – Les Claypool
9 *With Teeth* – Nine Inch Nails
8 *Coconut Oil* – Lizzo
7 *Jazz Impressions Of Japan* – The Dave Brubeck Quartet
6 *The Story Of The Ghost* – Phish
5 *Early Minor* – Miles Davis
4 *Three* – U2
3 *Live At The Isle Of Wight* – The Doors
2 *Miles In Tokyo* – Miles Davis
1 *Songs For The Deaf* – QOTSA

Official Vinyl Albums Chart

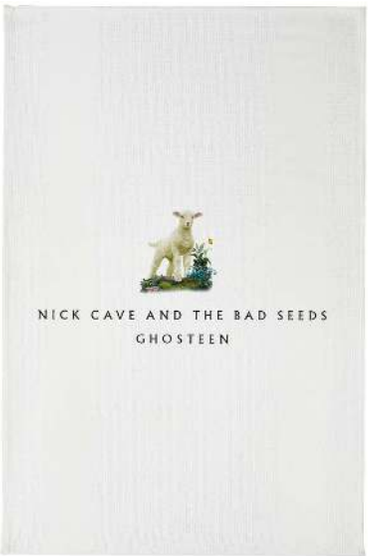
DECEMBER 2019

10 *Ghosteen* – Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds
9 *Peaky Blinders OST* – Various Artists
8 *Why Me? Why Not* – Liam Gallagher
7 *Greatest Hits* – Queen
6 *Abbey Road* – The Beatles
5 *When We All Fall Asleep Where Do We Go?* – Billie Eilish
4 *Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent* – Lewis Capaldi
3 *Rumours* – Fleetwood Mac
2 *Who* – The Who
1 *Everyday Life* – Coldplay

NEIL KRUG

The Selecter

Long Live Vinyl's essential picks for the month ahead



NICK CAVE GHOSTEEN TEA TOWEL

£10

www.store.nickcave.com

Praise be! *Long Live Vinyl*'s album of 2019 is now available in ultra-necessary tea towel format. And if you wish to neatly complete the circle, *Ghosteen* mugs are also available from the same source (£12 a pop).

THE END IS NEAR

£30

www.accartbooks.com

Feast your eyes upon previously unpublished photographs of the Sex Pistols' final UK gig taken by Kevin Cummins, the go-to snapper of British bands over the last four decades. This wonderfully well-designed coffee table semi-anarchic accessory is published by ACC Art Books, with a wordy introduction by Paul Morley.

SAM COOKE REISSUES

£25

www.abkco.com/artist/sam-cooke/

To accompany the release of Sam Cooke's *The Complete Keen Years (1957-1960)* boxset, comes news that the first three original albums in the set will also each be reissued on vinyl. All the releases form part of ABKCO's year-long celebration of what would have been Cooke's 90th birthday on 22 January 2021.

MASTERSOUNDS TURNTABLE WEIGHT

£50

www.mastersounds.co.uk

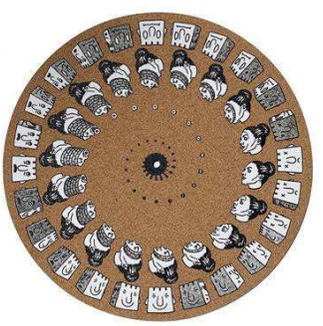
MasterSounds' dinky turntable weights are carefully designed to give your turntable a sonic boost. Benefits include improved bass response, tighter mids and controlled highs, as the handy device reduces unwanted resonance when placed on top of your records via the spindle.

MONORAIL TOTE BAG

£15

www.monorailmusic.com

These days, form outstrips function, especially when it comes to the no-longer humble tote bag. Glasgow's peerless record shop Monorail Music set their stall by them, and the latest offering is an over-the-shoulder work of art. Designed by Raissa Pardini, not only does it look good, you can actually carry your records in it as well.



CASTLE FACE SLIP MAT

£25

www.roughtrade.com

Die-hard fans of the experimental US indie label will be utterly delighted to know of the existence of a two-sided, silk screened, heavy duty cork slip mat. Available from Rough Trade.

Work In Progress

NICOLAS GODIN

CONCRETE AND GLASS **BECAUSE MUSIC** 24 JANUARY

My new album is... called *Concrete And Glass*. I found this title while I was driving in LA, looking for a famous house from the architect John Lautner in Beverly Hills.

The sessions... took place in Paris in a small room full of analogue synths and a computer, except for the drums, strings and a grand piano when came the time to pimp the tracks.

I worked with... a bunch of talented artists and singers (Californian Soul marvel Kadhja Bonet, Moscow's Kate NV, Cola Boyy a young artist from Oxnard, California, Australian oddball Kirin J Callinan, and Alexis Taylor from Hot Chip), a young producer (Pierre Rousseau) and a mix of old-time partners in crime (Vincent Taeger on drums, Tony Hoffer for the mix). All these guests recently released some records of theirs that I like the most.

I used my... 1979 Musicman Stingray bass with new strings for the first time. That was my first move before I got in the studio – change those strings. Once I had the right sword, then the battle could begin…

I was inspired by... architecture. I was travelling around the world, seeking for inspiration and feeding myself with the treasures of modernist architecture. The way I see it, houses are like movies, they need music to increase their power of attraction.

I learnt... how to patch an ARP 2600, the famous synthesiser hidden behind the sound of R2 D2's voice in *Star Wars*. I was talking about it recently to Jean-Michel Jarre and he told me that among his unbelievable collection of synths, this one was his all-time favourite.

Playing these songs live... may be surprising! I just finished a first round of rehearsals. I am really old-school and I don't use computers on stage, so don't expect any songs to sound exactly like they do on the record!

You might be surprised to know that... I finally came back to my first love: vocoders. After *Moon Safari* back in 1998, I had decided that I really couldn't use that trick again for the rest of my life, but I have enough distance now to be able to go back to my first love with pride.

Lost Shops

#8 MONKEY MUSIC EMPORIUM

Brighton is full of great record shops, but one that existed a good distance from the rest – and one of the very best – was Monkey Music Emporium on Baker Street. This shop, devoted to folk rock, psych, prog, art, experimental and post-punk, was a great hub for rock collectors who wanted good quality albums. Monkey opened in 2010 – although its proprietor mentioned to me he had started off in Hastings, but as that seaside town lacked the foot traffic a specialist rock shop needed he'd shifted to Brighton – and traded until autumn 2019. Monkey sold new and used (with an emphasis on used) and what treasure he would find: original pressings of Silver Apples, Moby Grape, Love and the most obscure psych-folk LPs decorated the walls alongside bins stuffed with exceptional, less expensive stock. Monkey had the largest stock of Zappa LPs I have ever seen and, jokingly, I asked if a Zappa fan had died only to be told, "he's my favourite artist so I try to stock everything he did." In summer 2019, word went out that Monkey was closing so I dropped in and, sadly, it was true. Brexit, said the owner, was forcing him out. He was shifting to Holland where he'd continue to work the record fairs. I did a final dig through Monkey's bins and found a copy of Dick Gaughan's *Handful Of Earth*. Brighton's loss is Europe's gain.

Garth Cartwright

DAVID ZAGDOUN

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

The Bella Union founder ponders the wisdom of a return to the road, as his band, Lost Horizons, prepare to release album number two

So I started recording a new Lost Horizons album last March with my partner-in-grime Richie Thomas. For those of you who don't know the story, Richie was the drummer of Dif Juz, one of the most underrated of 4AD bands; like a dubby post-rock math band before either existed. Richie was so good in fact, that at 15 he auditioned to be the original drummer for John Lydon's PiL and would have got the job, except he didn't have a passport and couldn't get one in time for the upcoming dates.

He plays drums and the saxophone like no one else, and has that punk spirit mixed with the soul of a New Orleans jazzer. Early Cocteaus fans will have noticed his name on a few of our records performing sax. He also moves in mysterious ways, literally. Rarely when I speak to him is he 'home'. Home is Queens Park in London and where he's been since I first met him in 1983. It is a spot located somewhere in the middle if you drew a triangle shape from Hampstead Heath to Marble Arch, then Kensal Green and back.

Naturally, he's a die-hard Queens Park Rangers fan and since I've known him he has been going to as many games as his mysterious life allows him to. We support different teams, but we share a love of being 'at the match'. In fact, he used to park his beloved Saab 900 outside my flat in Shepherds Bush on Saturdays before the games back in the 80s, and take the short walk to QPR's ground.

Richie is something of a butterfly. He loves taking off and then settling, breathing deeply, moving off again and then settling once more for a moment before that itch returns and he's away. He travels constantly, all for the love of meeting people and experiencing new language, food, culture and wide open spaces.

We are very different people, and yet our friendship is deep. Our language of communication is mostly music, and when we began our journey with Lost Horizons in 2017, it was just a selfish desire for both of us to indulge ourselves in making music again.

The only rules were that the initial recordings had to be improvised and then if nothing came of them, we would still have had that magical time together. And so starved were we both of the chance to let loose in a room and make a noise with no other egos to satisfy, it was an utter joy that bore unexpected fruit. It became something out of nothing with no plan, and everything was just all about letting the music inform us what to do with it.

Once we were finished with the debut, *Ojalá*, Richie was keen for us to play out live, but because of the nature of its original composition – typically him drumming and me playing a hastily tuned guitar, or an uncertain piano, followed by me returning home to layer bass, pianos, more guitars, flutes, strings and then a different featured vocalist on each piece – it was NOT that easy to recreate live.

But for 18 months, we somehow played a whole host of festivals and cities around Europe with a band of seven, an adorable collection of young Brighton musicians, with Richie and I, and our great friend Chris Anderson from Crayola Lectern. Richie was in his element, connecting with people doing what he loved to do the most. I kept the whole thing going as best I could, but it was pretty exhausting and as I am closing in on the last section of mixing the second album, I am unsure if I will want to tour the band again.

The only thing that can inform who should sing on each track is the music

The first album was recorded partly at the Bella Union studios in London and Brighton and the rest in my living room at home with headphones on! This time, it was pretty much the same, except at home I built a small studio in the garden, and that has made a huge difference. As well as the tracks we improvised together, in the same way as on *Ojalá*, we have both written more songs alone and then added to each other's skeletal beginnings.

There are some new featured vocalists on the second record, who have added an extra dimension, including an incredible 80-year-old soul singer from the US! Some of our treasured friends from before make a welcome return, such as Karen Peris from The Innocence Mission and Beth Cannon from LibraLibra.

The only thing that can inform who should sing on each track is the music, and I feel blessed that pretty much whenever I've sent music to a singer, it's come back better than I could have dreamed. It's not been an easy album to make. As some of you will know, I lost my mum recently, but out of that profound sadness has come a sense of purpose.

The other big change is that I decided I had to mix the album as well. *Ojalá* was mixed by my great friend Paul from Lanterns On The Lake, and it was tempting to have him mix this new one, too, but I felt I needed to do it myself. Paul gave me great encouragement throughout. Whenever I had doubts he reassured me, and that's a sign of what a great man he is.

So you can now say you heard about it here first, and it will be out later this year on Bella Union (naturally enough), and published by the amazing people at Faber Alt.

The Big Question

Addressing Vinyl's Most Pressing Issues

How can record shops sell more vinyl?

We ask a number of store owners what key issues need to be addressed to enable them to sell even more records in 2020

The vinyl market in the UK has witnessed 11 consecutive years of growth, from its lowest point in 2007, which means that the term 'vinyl revival' must now be used only in a historical context to describe the turnaround in fortunes. We are no longer experiencing the vinyl revival, it has revived, and it is sustainable.

However, laurels are not there simply to be sat on, and there are always challenges to be addressed to make the market stronger. To that end, *LLV* has approached a number of record shop owners and asked them the question in bold white type above: How can record shops sell more vinyl in 2020?

The two most prominent issues that crop up here are the price of vinyl and the desirability of the records made available to sell from the labels, especially the majors.

Steve Helsdown of Forest Vinyl in Cinderford isn't holding back: "The increasing price of new vinyl needs to be a focus in 2020. If the price rises carry on we could 'kill the goose'. The sub-£20 vinyl seems to be already heading into history, with some approaching the £30 mark. I don't believe the market for vinyl will continue to increase if the prices continue to rise."

Maria Harris, the owner of Tallbird Records in Chesterfield, is in total agreement. "Keeping prices of new releases realistic is essential. Some cost prices for albums, especially reissues, are veering into the £20-plus territory. That means a selling price of £30-plus. Certainly for our customer demographic, new vinyl is increasingly a 'once in a blue moon' luxury purchase, and not a weekly habit like it used to be."

MORE GOOD RECORDS

It may sound obvious, but the shops are also reliant on the labels to provide stock that sells. Adam Gillison at Jumbo Records in Leeds hits the nail on the nut succinctly: "The short answer is that we need lots of good records!" Steve at Forest backs this up. "There needs to be a little more imagination, especially by the majors, in the choice of vinyl reissues. Why exactly it was thought necessary to reissue Phil Collins and Lionel Richie, for example, when the market is already flooded with Mint pre-loved copies going for £1? There are so many 90s/00s albums and 70s prog and punk LPs just crying out for a quality repress. More along the lines of Gene Clark's *No Other* from 4AD would be very much appreciated."

Record shop owners are wishing for realistic pricing

Tom Friend from Friendly Records in Bristol takes up this theme and runs with it. "Labels need to work hard at making sure the new releases are interesting and help to create a demand for them. We've been lucky enough to be part of the Dinked Edition group of independent shops this year and that's been ace, already at 35 releases, all of them have been great records, but also with limited packaging that means that hopefully they are more desirable!"

Derry Watkins from Resident Records in Brighton, one of the founders of the Dinked collective, raises a final related issue: "We'd like to see labels and suppliers have a bit more confidence in their releases, keeping key lines available to order and pressing more physical copies of new releases to help them reach their true sales potential. At the moment, when we re-order, we're just as likely to find that titles are out of stock or deleted as we are to actually have them re-supplied. Sadly, this poor availability means we'll never be able to fulfil the real demand for vinyl."

The Completist

PETE PAPHIDES

Before the age of instant gratification, our columnist remembers squeezing into a phone box to hear the chart hits of the time. Dial-a-Disc will always have a place in his heart

We've all seen those clickbait articles that sit at the bottom of the internet, offering you a shot of brutal perspective on the passing of time. "Want to feel old? Look at these child stars now!" reads the caption, countering the immense resistibility of the question with a picture of, say, Zammo from *Grange Hill* or the girl from St Winifred's School Choir as we remember them back in the day. Suddenly, you find your inner voice exclaiming, "Yes! Maybe if the carrot being dangled before me is the prospect of that sweet little girl now literally looking like the grandma she once sang about, well then, I VERY MUCH DO WANT TO FEEL OLD!!!"

I can tell you that a similar effect can be achieved merely by commencing the conversation I had with my daughters a few weeks ago, concerning the way we used to consume music. The spur was the yearning keyboard intro of The Motors' *Airport* – enough of a cue to propel me into an instant reverie concerning the obsession that took hold of me on first hearing that song.

"I sat next to the radio and cassette recorder for what felt like hours, waiting for Radio 1 to play it so I could tape it and be able to listen to it again and again." Perhaps as a result of the Stockholm Syndrome-like effects of having a dad with an entire room stocked floor-to-ceiling with records, my kids seem to enjoy these stories. Having only known the instant gratification of the streaming era, they almost seem to crave the delicious deprivation of not getting to choose when you might next get to hear the song currently obsessing you.

But even that pales in comparison with the amazement that ensues when you tell them about Dial-a-Disc. This much I can confirm because I can still recall the shocked expression that gazed back at me in the rear view mirror as I told them about the even greater lengths to which I would sometimes go to hear my favourite records. For those of you too young to remember, Dial-a-Disc was a service run by British Telecom, in which you dialled a three-digit number and listened to a record from the Top 10 on the other end of the receiver.

"But you got to choose the record, right?" exclaimed Dora (18). "Press one for the number one song; two for the number two; etc."

"No!" I explained. "There was no pressing anything in those days! Remember, we had those phones where you dialled the number. You didn't get to choose the record." The more I talked, the more I realised how improbable this all sounded. When I was six, as a treat, my mum would give me a few 2p pieces and let me stand in the telephone box directly outside the fish and chip shop they ran.

I was banned from calling Dial-a-Disc at home, so over time, I came to associate the telephone box with the sensation of listening to whatever was in the charts at that time. The first time I went in there, my older brother Aki was on hand to show me. We squeezed inside and dialled the number. The moment the beeping noise sounded, I got the first of my 2p coins and pushed it into the slot. You had to force the coin down so it pushed a metal bar back, and only when the coin dropped did the beeping stop.

Imagine hearing some of your first records via a phone receiver pressed against your ear! A noise so detached from the physical beings who created it that it sounds as though it wants you to rescue it from wherever it's currently incarcerated.

Imagine hearing some of your first records via a phone pressed against your ear

Pete Paphides is a music journalist, record collector and broadcaster. Catch him on Soho Radio every Tuesday, 12-2pm

A ghost in a machine. Ghosts such as Tina Charles' *I Love To Love (But My Baby Loves To Dance)* and Candi Staton's *Young Hearts (Run Free)*: both disco, and yet totally different. Tina's song (British, white, provincial) was far less cool than Candi's (American, black, soulful, tinged with sadness). But only years later would I even find out the names of the singers. Dial-a-Disc didn't tell you who they were or even what the songs were called.

In the space between fascination and information, I imagined personalities and stories and ascribed them to the people singing the songs. Tina and Candi merged into the same person: a bounteously benign mum/sister/teacher/childminder hybrid who had somehow selected me as the sole recipient of her kindness.

"Wow. That sounds like something from 100 years ago," exclaimed Dora. To be fair, that's how it sounded to me, too. "I know this sounds funny seeing as I wasn't alive, but I miss those days," sighed Eavie. "Believe me," I said. "It's better now. The seven-year-old me would have traded all of that for just an hour with Spotify."

"Maybe," she replied. "But sometimes it's just nice to miss things, isn't it? To not have everything at your fingertips. Don't you miss missing things, dad?" It was a good question. Did I miss missing things? Or was I, to borrow from Jonathan Richman in *That Summer Feeling*, just pining for the way that I was?

"I do miss missing things," I explained to them. "But, d'you know what? Not half as much as I enjoy the longing that comes with knowing I can never go back."

Rumours Has It

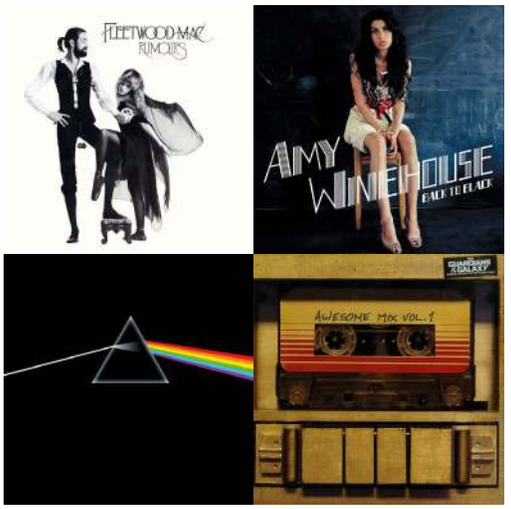
The 2010s were a vital decade for vinyl, but which acts were its biggest sellers?

With more vinyl available on more racks since the dawning of the CD age, record buyers are once again armed with the freedom of choice, but which albums proved the most popular among record buyers in the 2010s?

Scanning the Official Albums Chart results for the last decade, it's apparent that they read like a greatest hits of the last 63 years (when the charts started) with a few modern takes thrown in.

At the top of the tree is *Rumours* by Fleetwood Mac, which has been a regular fixture of the Top 100 for the last few years thanks to its vinyl edition, with 130,000 vinyl sales since the decade began. Representing the modern age, Amy Winehouse's *Back To Black* notches second place with 125,000 sales, while Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* bags third with 113,000. Of the contemporary acts to make an impact, Artic Monkeys' *AM* is a credible number six, one below The Stone Roses' debut.

Go to officialcharts.com for the full rundown.



62,500

The price in pounds that Brian Epstein's copy of a rare Beatles audition tape recorded for Decca in January 1962 sold for in an auction held by Sotheby's in December.

LIVE AT KINGSTON

Our friends at Banquet Records in Kingston have announced they're putting on The Who's smallest gig in 40 years at the 2,000-capacity converted cinema Prizm in Kingston. To mark the release of their new album, *Who*, the rock legends are playing the show on 14 February, the 50th anniversary of the Live At Leeds concert.

4 OF A KIND... Quadrilateral Shapes

LINDA PERHACS
PARALLELOGRAMS
The US folk singer turned dental hygienist's cult debut album was inspired by the simple quadrilateral with two pairs of parallel sides.

BUCK 65
SQUARE
The Nova Scotian alternative rapper's 2002 album shares a title with the best known of all the quadrilaterals.

KIRSTY MACCOLL
KITE
In the absence of any significant oblong or trapezium releases, the late, great Kirsty MacColl's 1989 breakthrough album flies high in our list.

SQUAREPUSHER
PORT RHOMBUS EP
The first Squarepusher release on Warp Records dates back to 1996. Did you know another name for the rhombus is the equilateral quadrilateral?

Coming Soon...

OUR PICK OF THE NEW VINYL RELEASES

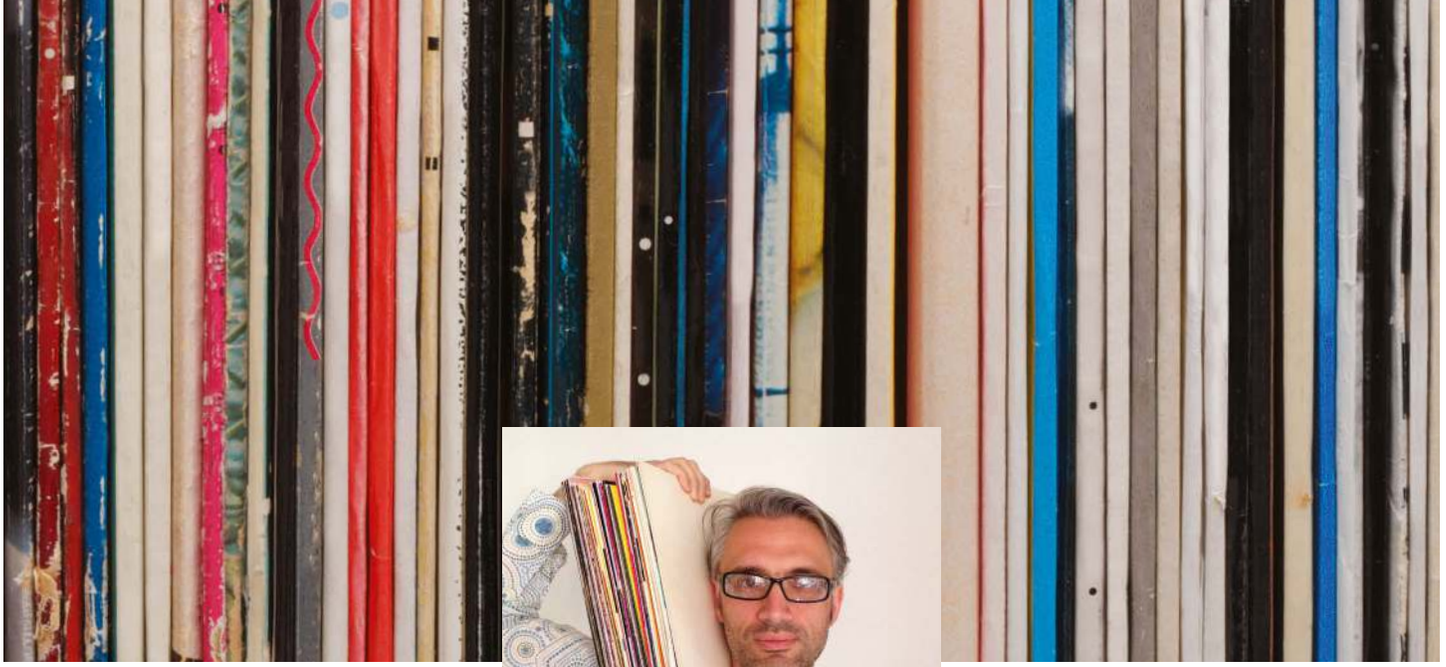
17 JANUARY ...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of The Dead, *X: The Godless Void And Other Stories* (Dine Alone Records); Algiers, *There Is No Year* (Matador); Anti-Flag, *20/20 Vision* (Spinefarm Records); Bill Fay, *Countless Branches* (Dead Oceans); Bombay Bicycle Club, *Everything Else Has Gone Wrong* (Mmm... Records); Holy Fuck, *Deleter* (Last Gang Records); Pinegrove, *Marigold* (Rough Trade)

24 JANUARY Andy Shauf, *The Neon Skyline* (ANTI-); Black Lips, *Sing In A World That's Falling Apart* (Fire); Nicolas Godin, *Concrete And Glass* (Because Music); Wire, *Mind Hive* (Pinkflag); Wolf Parade, *Thin Mind* (Sub Pop)

31 JANUARY Ben Watt, *Storm Damage* (Caroline International); Destroyer, *Have We Met* (Merge); Drive-By-Truckers, *The Unravelling* (ATO Records); Isobell Campbell, *There Is No Other* (Cooking Vinyl); Poliça, When We Stay Alive (Memphis Industries); Squarepusher, *Be Up A Hello* (Warp); Torres, *Silver Tongue* (Merge)

7 FEBRUARY Green Day, *Father Of All...* (Reprise); La Roux, *Supervision* (Supercolour Records); Nada Surf, *Never Not Together* (City Slang); Sepultura, *Quadra* (Nuclear Blast); Stone Temple Pilots, *Perdida* (Warner); The Cadillac Three, *Country Fuzz* (Big Machine)

14 FEBRUARY Tame Impala, *The Slow Rush* (Fiction)



IAN PEEL'S
LINER NOTES

With scant regard for his own well being, our brave columnist dives headfirst into prog-rock waters and, specifically, the vinyl-centric world of The Alan Parsons Project

Alan Parsons had an auspicious start, as our prog-minded readers will know. Two of his first credits as engineer? *Abbey Road* (itself a progenitor of the genre) and *The Dark Side Of The Moon*.

So if anyone was going to take progressive rock forward after two albums like that, it was Mr Parsons. Although first he had to hone his craft, spending the bulk of the 70s producing and engineering for the likes of Cat Stevens, Al Stewart and, my personal favourite, Cockney Rebel's *The Psychomodo*.

He also worked with some of the musicians that would form the backline of The Alan Parsons Project – Pilot, the singer Lenny Zakatek and the orchestral arranger Andrew Powell. And when he met songwriter and lyricist Eric Woolfson everything fell into place to create what would eventually become a 10-album prog powerhouse.

Actually, there was one other element that was a fundamental part of the The Alan Parsons Project line-up (and prog rock itself, I would argue) and that's vinyl.

The Project's music was created for 'sides' – specific songs sequenced for Side One and a different atmosphere and selection for Side Two. Musical ideas and soundtrack-esque suites were also written and constructed to the running times of vinyl. How sprawling and dreary might prog have been if it was invented in the CD age? Or how visually unimpressive would it have felt if it had started to appear at the height of the cassette boom?

There's something special about prog and vinyl. You just can't have one without the other. You get this in other culture streams too, the perfect fusion of form and function. I realised this the other day when I went to see a performance of the playwright James Graham's (he of *Brexit: The Uncivil War*) *The Vote*. It's a play written specifically for, and is only ever performed on, the night of a general election.

How sprawling and dreary might prog have been if it was invented in the CD age?

So how did The Alan Parsons Project fuse form and function? Perhaps the best example is their first album, the rock/poetry epic from 1976, *Tales Of Mystery And Imagination*, which is part music and part book. Parsons and Woolfson commissioned Hipgnosis to create a detailed mix of words, lists, chronologies and images, the latter of which centred around what Parsons called The 'Taped' Man, a "mummy-like figure who is wrapped, not in bandages, but in 2" recording tape."

Cut forward to the Project's last-but-one album, 1985's *Stereotomy*, and, again, they did something that heightened the experience of the music that would simply not have been possible if it had been released only on CD (or even a download).

Stereotomy's sleeve was a combination of plastic colour filters which, when overlaid on the main paper parts, gave you visual stereotomy while listening to audio *Stereotomy*. Genuinely brain-frying at the time, and enough to win the album a Grammy nomination not for its music but for its use of the vinyl medium in the 'Best Album Package' category.

THE VINYLIST CHRIS REID

Chris' LPs are sprawling out from their corner of the living room

What was the first record you bought?
"The first band I ever really got into was Oasis. At 14, they were pretty much the only thing I spent money on. I bought the CDs for listening to and the vinyl mainly because I liked how big they were. I didn't have a turntable to play them on back then but, as a result, they're now in excellent condition. The first record I bought was *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?*. Some of the 12" singles change hands for upwards of £80 nowadays."

Which artists and genres are you most interested in?
"In the early 2000s, I was working a lot in Liverpool. If you haven't had your jabs, it's very easy to contract Beatlemania there, even now. Fortunately for my wallet, this was a few years before the big vinyl comeback and I managed to pick up first pressings of all the albums for not too much money. I remember finding a near-Mint stereo copy of *A Hard Day's Night* in the Oxfam on Bold Street for £20. I'm mainly into 1950s and 60s rock 'n' roll, 90s guitar bands, and anything broadly alternative. My favourite album of recent years is Phoebe Bridgers' *Stranger In The Alps*."

How many records do you have?
"The ballpark figure is around 500 that I currently have out on rotation. There's another 50 or so in a bag for life facing relegation to eBay. It was quite a job to convince my wife that the records should live in the living room. I'm acutely aware that the collection is starting to sprawl out from its corner. However, they're always the main talking point when we have visitors, so she's grown to appreciate them."

What's the most valuable record in your collection?
"It's Oasis again. I have a white label test pressing of *Morning Glory* that features the song *Step Out,* which was cut from the finished album due to similarities to Stevie Wonder's *Uptight*. I'm sure only a handful would have been produced. No idea what it's worth, but I'd only part with it for silly money. Other than that, I have a signed copy of Kate Bush's *Hounds Of Love,* which is one of my favourite albums of all time, and a copy of

Sufjan Stevens' *Illinoise* complete with the recalled Superman cover."

What's the holy grail record that you'd most like to own?
"A few years ago, I owned a near-Mint first pressing of Nick Drake's *Five Leaves Left*. I ended up selling it on, which I've regretted ever since. The money probably went on car insurance or council tax or something exciting like that. I still have my copies of *Bryter Layter* and *Pink Moon,* so all is not lost."

What's your listening setup?
"Nothing too fancy. I'm aware of the dangers of becoming a true audiophile. I have a Rega Planar 2 going through a Pro-Ject Phono Box DS into a Denon Hi-Fi and out through some Cambridge Audio S30 speakers. I'd upgrade in a shot if I won the lottery."

MOST VALUABLE VINYL

ANGEL OLSEN
BURN YOUR FIRE FOR NO WITNESS
This is the 2014 US limited edition 11-track LP pressed on white vinyl. It's the second studio album by the American singer-songwriter, and comes with a picture sleeve with lyric insert and digital download code card.
£40

BOB DYLAN
SELF PORTRAIT
1970 German first-press 24-track double LP on the plain orange label, housed in a unique silk laminated gatefold picture sleeve, which opts for the artist and album title print just above Bob's *Self Portrait* image. All other pressings leave this information blank.
£125

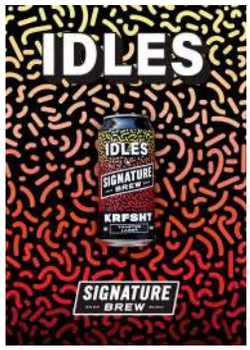
THE DOORS
MORRISON HOTEL
Rare 1970 UK first issue 11-track stereo LP on the red Elektra label, gatefold picture sleeve with the catalogue number EKS75007.
£175

THE COURTEENERS
ST. JUDE
Rare 2008 UK limited edition 12-track LP pressed on heavyweight vinyl, housed in the illustrated picture sleeve and a printed inner bag.
£250

Now Spinning

What we've been listening to post-Christmas, while finishing off the last of our supply of the IDLES x Signature Brew KRFSHT limited-edition toasted lager

Idiot Wind **Bob Dylan** (CBS)
Money Is A Memory **Field Music** (MI)
Hung **Wire** (Pink Flag)
Heart Attack **Courteeners** (Ignition)
Come Get Me **Nada Surf** (City Slang)
Salt Of The Earth **Bill Fay** (Dead Oceans)
Monkey Business **Pet Shop Boys** (X2)
The Neon Skyline **Andy Shauf** (ANTI-)
Here Come The Warm Dreads
Lee 'Scratch' Perry (On-U Sound)
Debris **Keeley Forsyth** (The Leaf Label)
Torres **Good Scare** (Merge)



Feel Every Beat

Marr and Sumner's 1991 debut set for reissue

Electronic's self-titled debut album is one of the first big reissues of 2020, with Rhino announcing limited-edition white vinyl and standard black vinyl versions due out on 24 January. Both pressings will have the black cover used on the CD version for the first time on vinyl. "We were two musicians who wanted to get away from the suffocating politics of the band," says Marr of the project he lauched with New Order's Bernard Sumner the same year The Smiths split, with the album arriving in May 1991. "At the same time, it was OK for duos and DJs and non-groups to make records, and that really appealed to Bernard and me."

In other Johnny Marr news, a new boxset titled *Single Life* collects together all of the guitar hero's first 10 solo singles on coloured 7-inch vinyl, along with unheard demos and art prints. It's out now.

IT'S ALL A BLUR

Jonathan Wilson's new album, *Dixie Blur,* is due out on 6 March through Bella Union. Recorded in Nashville with co-producer Pat Sansone of Wilco, it harks back to Wilson's Southern roots and was recorded live with few overdubs. Wilson plays London's Lafayette venue on 8 April.

do you have a record collection to sell?

top prices paid for vinyl LPs, 12"s, 7"s, singles, EPs, CDs,

autographs, music memorabilia, concert programmes & more

posters, handbills, tickets, picture discs,

coloured vinyl records, box sets, limited editions

pop. rock. metal. prog. punk. jazz. blues. folk. classical

from the '50s. '60s. '70s. '80s. '90s. '00s

single items or entire collections wanted

we can visit you – or bring your items to our monthly buying days in Meopham – Kent or Soho – London

get dates and directions at https://99l.com/buying-days

can't make the date? let us collect from you for free

call free 0800 345 7551
or overseas callers dial +44 1474 815 099
email: buyers@99l.com

99

eil.com rare records

991.com answer the call

WORKING MEN'S CLUB

Jonathan Wright meets a Heavenly Records four-piece tipped for big things in 2020

Sydney Minsky-Sargeant has strict criteria when it comes to his work. "Music should either be funny, sexy or sad," says the frontman and songwriter with Working Men's Club. These are adjectives that could certainly be applied to the music of his band, and the quartet – Minsky-Sargeant, bassist Liam Ogburn, plus Rob Graham (Drenge) and Mairead O'Connor (Moonlandingz), both on guitars and synth – look set to be big in 2020.

Not that Minsky-Sargeant, taking time out with Ogburn to chat with *LLV* before a show at Bristol's Louisiana, seems unduly preoccupied with the idea of success. "Music's about music, art's about art," he says. "If you really are invested in it, you're going to do it whether people like it or not."

It's appropriate, then, that Minsky-Sargeant and Ogburn are both music obsessives. Minsky-Sargeant, who studied songwriting at Manchester's BIMM, wrote his first song, *Scary Castle*, "about a scary castle", when he was four. And while Ogburn started playing later, as a 16-year-old living in Widnes, he was immediately hooked. "I think it's the best thing that's ever been invented, the guitar," he says.

Minsky-Sargeant grew up in Todmorden in the Upper Calder Valley, West Yorkshire, a small-town upbringing. It's a beautiful part of the world but, in the words of Minsky-Sargeant, "You feel very trapped there, there's not much going on." Except a local pub, The Golden Lion, that lets bands put on shows. "We come from the background of going round grassroots venues, and without grassroots venues there wouldn't be bands like us because we wouldn't have had the platform to play," says Minsky-Sargeant.

It was the landlord of The Golden Lion, Richard Walker, says Minsky-Sargeant, who first alerted the wider world to the potential of Working Men's Club, texting a number of music industry contacts. This eventually led to a one-off single, the post-punk-tinged *Bad Blood* via the Manchester indie label Melodic in early 2019.

By the summer, the band had signed to Heavenly. As Ogburn notes, luck was involved here. "There are so many great bands in this country who never get picked up purely because of not being in the right place at the right time," he says.

It was a record that captured Working Men's Club at a specific point in the band's evolution. While second single *Teeth* was recorded with original members Giulia Bonometti and Jake Bogacki (whose departures from the band were announced in October), it reflected Minsky-Sargeant's interest in electronics, recalling as it did Suicide, early Soft Cell and even the pop bludgeon of Frankie Goes To Hollywood.

Later that night, the Louisiana crackles with anticipation and Working Men's Club don't disappoint. He may still be a teenager, but Minsky-Sargeant, intense and just a little arrogant, already knows how to work an audience. Allied to his raw talent, time spent watching the likes of Fat White Family and The Brian Jonestown Massacre during support slots has clearly paid off. The band's sound is fierce, yet pop-tinged melodies again and again cut through.

As for the year ahead, a debut album, recorded in Sheffield with Ross Orton, is in the offing. "We have our sound now, as tedious as that sounds," says Minsky-Sargeant, safe in the knowledge there's nothing whatsoever dull about Working Men's Club.

ROSIE BUTCHER

Supergrass

THE STRANGE ONES
1994—2008

LIMITED EDITION,
CAREER-SPANNING
SUPER DELUXE BOX SET

THE 6 ORIGINAL STUDIO ALBUMS ON PICTURE DISC LP & CD

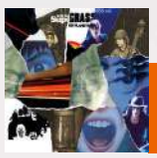
7 CDS OF UNRELEASED LIVE MATERIAL, B-SIDES, RARITIES, OUT-TAKES, DEMOS, ACOUSTIC VERSIONS, MIXES

DELUXE BOOK WITH NOTES, BAND QUOTES AND RARE PHOTOS

7" SINGLE WITH NEW BAND MIXES

POSTERS AND BUTTON BADGES

ORDER NOW



ALSO AVAILABLE: 'THE STRANGE ONES, 1994–2008' ON HEAVYWEIGHT 2LP & 1CD

SUPERGRASS 'THE STRANGE ONES' TOUR FEB–APRIL 2020
WWW.SUPERGRASS.COM

BMG ECHO

ON SALE NOW!

Available in WHSmith and all good newsagents or online at anthem-publishing.com/popbackissues

CRATE DIGGING WITH...
PORTICO QUARTET

With their latest album *Memory Streams* out now, Duncan Bellamy and Jack Wylie each unveil five albums that have made a deep impression on them

JON HASSELL
THE SURGEON OF THE NIGHTSKY...
"Possibly my favourite Jon Hassell record and certainly my favourite title. This is Hassell close to his most minimal. Looped trumpets blend with synths to create a masterpiece of ambient music where the stillness and space work more as light than anything overtly musical." JW

HIROSHI YOSHIMURA
SOUNDSCAPE 1: SURROUND
"It comes from a tradition of Japanese ambient music where artists are commissioned to make music for specific spaces. This synth-based record is contemplative but incorporates strong melodic themes alongside atmospheric field recordings." JW

STEVE REICH
MUSIC FOR 18 MUSICIANS
"Possibly the most seminal work of American minimalism. I've seen this piece live twice and love the way in which it is performed and how it unfolds. Reich knew the power of rhythm through human interaction from his studies of Ghanaian drumming." JW

JOHN COLTRANE
A LOVE SUPREME
"Coltrane wrote this piece after he kicked heroin. He made a deal with God that if he helped him kick the habit he'd devote his life to him through music. The sense of inner searching alongside the reach for something higher can be completely overpowering. It's jazz at its most cosmic and emotional." JW

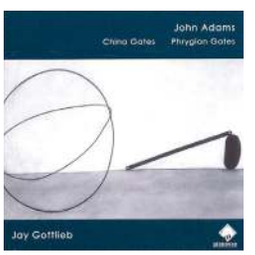
ARTHUR RUSSELL
WORLD OF ECHO
"One of only two albums released in his lifetime. I love the way he creates space within songs through his use of echo, distortion and phaser when applied to his cello. It enables him to extend the possibilities of the instrument and create a huge sense of space, while retaining its intimacy and nuance." JW

ACTRESS
R.I.P
"On this record, Actress (Darren Cunningham) inverts the formal qualities of dance music to create an album that is utterly captivating, alien and profound. Taking some cues and inspiration from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, this is probably the most spacious and ambient of his albums to date." DB

GIGI MASIN
WIND
"A unique, utterly mesmerising record that I keep coming back to time and again. I first encountered Gigi Masin though his work with much-revered ambient band Gaussian Curve. There is such an honesty and rawness to this album that it feels refreshingly uncontrived." DB

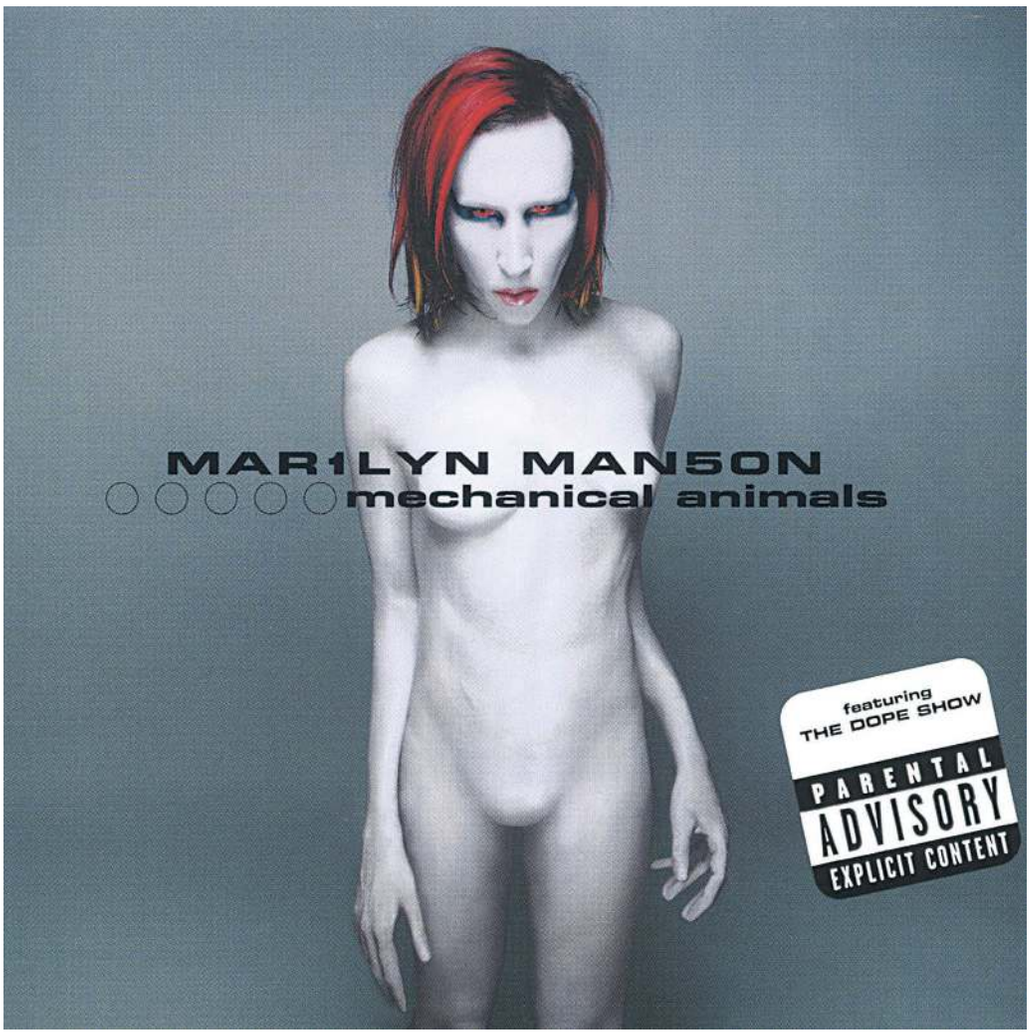
MILES DAVIS
IN A SILENT WAY
"*Bitches Brew* is the record of this period that always gets the acclaim, but *In A Silent Way* is the album that made the bigger impression on me. It divided Miles' audience at the time, but to me it is an incredibly sophisticated work that marries music and new studio techniques to great effect." DB

ONEOHTRIX POINT NEVER
REPLICA
"I love pretty much all of the music Daniel Lopatin releases, but of all his albums *Replica* feels one of the most timeless. Mainly written and constructed on a Roland SP404 sampler, it's a textured work that samples 80s commercials to transform them into beautiful compositions." DB



JOHN ADAMS
CHINA GATES / PHRYGIAN GATES
"Technically not strictly an album, but two accompanying pieces, I love these shimmering, reflective works for solo piano. They seem to operate at a fascinating point where strict process minimalism merges with something more expressive." DB

DUNCAN BELLAMY VEIL PROJECTS



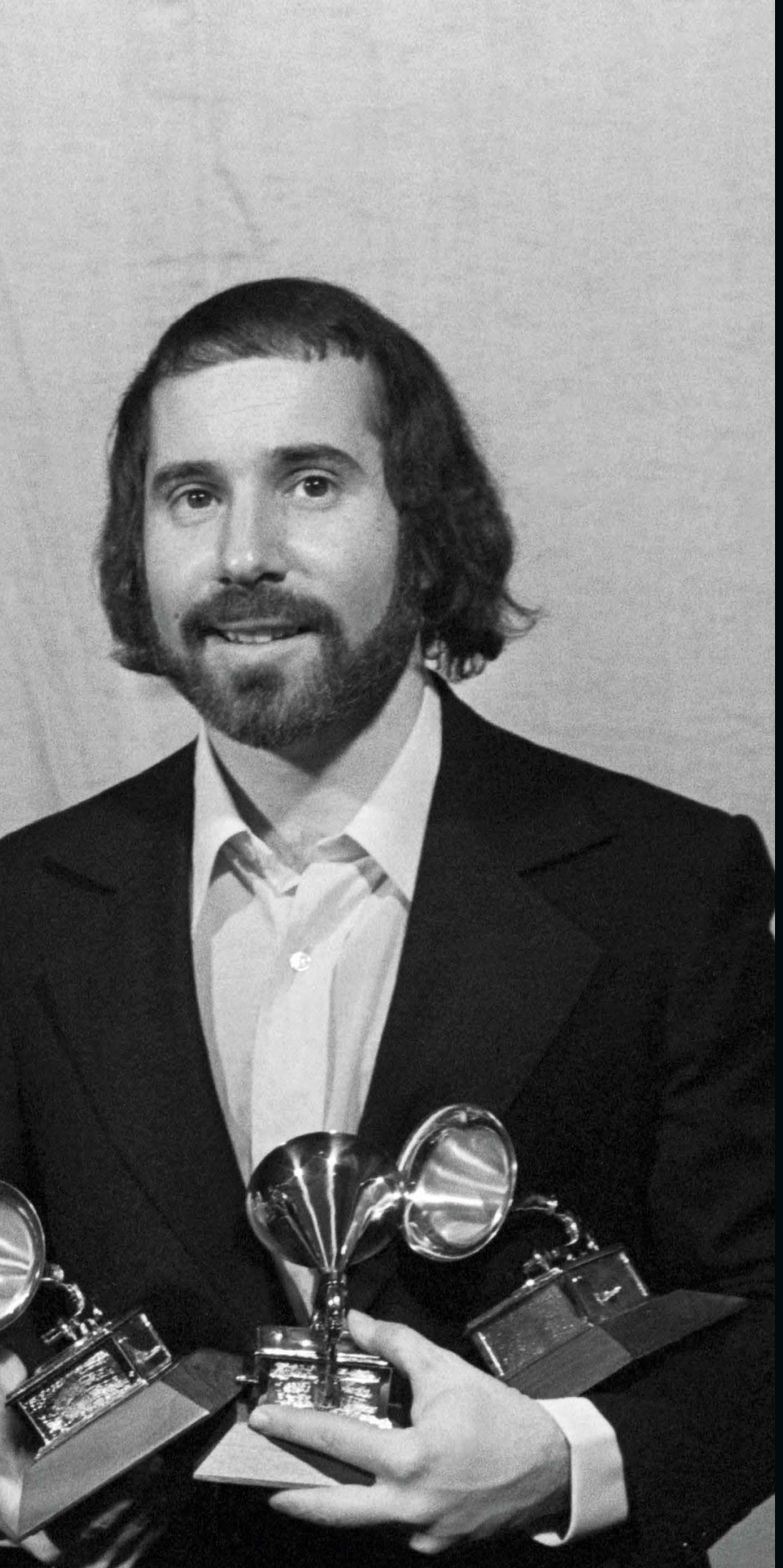
#33 Marilyn Manson
MECHANICAL ANIMALS

The cover for Marilyn Manson's third album and second in a trilogy released in reverse chronological order was a controversial one. Designed by Paul Brown and shot by regular Manson collaborator Joseph Cultice, it features the singer naked, sans dangly bits and daubed in a latex layer created by a Japanese special effects artist called Screaming Mad George. The false breasts Manson sports under the latex are said to now be in the hands of Johnny Depp, while the Photoshopped hips reportedly belong to Elle Macpherson.

The vinyl version of the album was split into two separate releases, the main record on opaque white vinyl and another on blue vinyl with a more mainstream-friendly cover credited to Omēga And The Mechanical Animals. While the design caused consternation among more sensitive critics and was banned by Walmart, the cover is rich with symbolism, largely relating to the number 15. The 15-track album was released on 15 September; the lettering reads Mar1lyn Man5on; Manson's left hand has six fingers (5+1). Brown said of the design in the book *The Greatest Album Covers Of All Time*: "I'm extremely proud of it. I said more in one of his covers than any novel could. It made people think and cringe."

Manson himself approved wholly of the cover: "He was crazy about it," reported Cultice.

BETTMANN/GETTY



SNAPSHOT

SIMON & GARFUNKEL

LOS ANGELES, 1971

Art Garfunkel and Paul Simon just about manage to hold five of the six Grammy Awards they received from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences at a star-studded ceremony in Hollywood. Their fifth and final studio album, *Bridge Over Troubled Water,* had just won the fractious duo an award for Album Of The Year, as well as for Best Engineered Recording, while its title track won the awards for Record Of The Year, Song Of The Year and Contemporary Song Of The Year, not to mention the Instrumental Arrangement Of The Year. The album was released on 26 January, 1970 and by the time they picked up the gongs they had already split up as a recording duo – with Garfunkel preferring to concentrate on his film career, while Simon continued to channel his considerable talent into music. His first album post-split, called simply *Paul Simon*, was released in 1972 to widespread critical acclaim, but far fewer Grammy nominations. Them's the breaks.

WHY I LOVE

RANDY NEWMAN
LITTLE CRIMINALS

SETH LAKEMAN

As the Mercury-nominated folk songwriter releases a new record commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower's voyage to America, he tells **Gary Walker** about a special album

This album was lying in my dad's extensive vinyl collection when I found it. He was a big fan of Randy Newman, and along with Chris De Burgh, I really consider those two the 'soundtrack to my dad'. I loved the sound of the band and Randy's voice. By my foggy recollection, I must have only been 12 or 13 at the time I discovered the record and started listening to him. I was getting absorbed by the West Coast sound of those 70s records; Glyn Johns' production, the Eagles, Fleetwood Mac, Warren Zevon and Ry Cooder. I wouldn't say I was listening to much of the music popular among my friends at the time, something that still seems to be true nowadays!

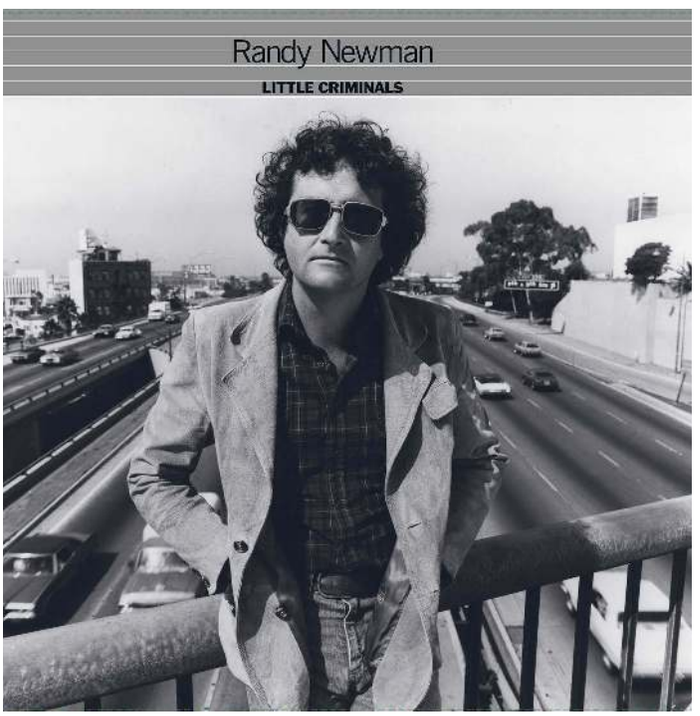
The cover artwork is great, too. It's a shot of Newman in a classic cream-coloured 70s suit stood over a busy LA freeway, although I wouldn't say that was what initially drew me to the record. I was particularly struck by the first song on this album, called *Short People* – it appealed to me. So many references to being short and how you might struggle with height restrictions. Something I can relate to!

I think it also had an impact on me as it was made in 1977, the year I was born, which marked a great time in songwriting and in the recording industry. The track *Rider In The Rain*, towards the end of this album, is particularly nostalgic for me, and is a song my dad has been singing for years on concertina. It shows the wide appeal Randy Newman's songs have, as my dad is still singing it…

My father's love of Newman, and the fact that I was introduced to his music by my dad, is something even more profound. I'm a big fan of all Newman's albums, and I, of course, love the *Toy Story* soundtrack, which my kids have just discovered. Newman's music really has transcended the generations of the Lakeman family, being passed from fathers to their children. My kids will happily listen to all of Newman's music on car journeys because of their association with him in the films. It's such a wonderful thing that his contemporary writing for films has given him such longevity and appeal to vastly differing age groups. A rebirth of a career almost, another string to his bow.

Newman's got a unique voice that seems to attract all walks of life. You can see why Disney have always chosen him to be a composer and singer. At 23, I was at a folk alliance in the US with my brother and we somehow blagged our way into a solo performance he was doing for all the bigwigs at DreamWorks. I was one of only 70 people there. He was doing a 'My life in song' style seminar, where he would play a track, and after would talk about all the influences and compositional elements that went into the song. It was wonderful to hear him break down all the orchestral arrangements, and to hear him play his biggest songs stripped back on piano. He's such a talented man and uses politics and a cynical play on characters, he's always got something to say about or for someone. I would say his use of metaphors and wordplay is something I've always tried to work into my own lyric writing, but really it's the arrangements, vocal melodies and production hooks that have made their way unconsciously into my playing.

With his background in composition, there's also a huge depth of harmony and arrangement. Later on in life, I discovered this album had the Eagles singing and Ry Cooder playing throughout, so it's pretty special in that respect, too. I love the way Newman always incorporates orchestral arrangements within his songs. It always seems to take the music to some wonderful places and it's sonically fabulous to listen to loud, especially on vinyl. ●



10 Questions For... ROBERT FORSTER

On the occasion of the release of the second instalment of the *G Stands For Go-Betweens* boxset, co-founder Robert Forster casts an eye back at the band's matchless middle period. Gary Tipp interrogates the Brisbanite

Do you think the three studio albums in the boxset represent the peak of your powers as a band? Your imperial phase?
"I think they are very good as a three-album run. Perhaps our best, but I hesitate to commit to those kinds of groupings."

Did leaving Sire for Beggars Banquet feel like a new beginning for the band? The songwriting on *Liberty Belle* seems to have found another gear...
"It did find another gear. It went up to fourth gear. I had learnt a lot about my songwriting over the previous years. There were hints of where I was going on *Draining The Pool For You* and *Part Company* from *Spring Hill Fair*. A more 'classic' approach, but definitely in my own style. I fell in love with a strumming kind of melody again, that I had in the late 70s. But I was doing that much better in the mid-80s."

Were you and Grant McLennan competitive as songwriters?
"We were, but it was a healthy look at each other's work. Not bitter or tough. We watched what each other did. New advances in chord structures or new kinds of riffs appearing in songs. *Cattle And Cane* showed me a new way of writing 'personal' lyrics. Bringing family and friends into songs."

The live double LP in the boxset captures a Town & Country Club gig dating back to May, 1987. Is it a gig you can recall?
"Very clearly. It was a big show for us. We lived in London at the time, so it was kind of a hometown show, and you remember them. Plus, we knew we were being recorded. The mobile recording truck was parked outside."

What difference did the inclusion of multi-instrumentalist Amanda Brown make to the band?
"An enormous amount, but also she was a big influence on our new live sound. We sounded bigger and punchier on stage. Also, with a violin and oboe player in the band, it meant we sounded like no one else. Which is always a good thing. On *Tallulah*, she broadened our sound, and gave it more drama, which the songs needed."

***16 Lovers Lane* coincided with the band's return to Australia. Did that have an impact on the way it sounded?**
"Yes, it did. It is almost a cliché how the differences from London to Sydney make us sound. *Tallulah* was very dark and dramatic and screaming for attention, while there is a sunny languid charm to *16 Lovers Lane* recorded in Sydney. Light comes in. The struggle of London life gives way."

Were the demos recorded with producer Tony Cohen intended for the seventh album before the 80s split?
"Yes, there was supposed to be 10 or 12 songs chosen from these songs to be the seventh Go-Betweens album. Not rediscovered gems, the good songs still sound good and the OK songs still sound OK. A song of Grant's, *You Can Dream About Tomorrow,* is one of his very best. And an unrecorded song of mine here, *Running The Risk Of Losing You*, I still strum and admire."

The accepted definition of The Go-Betweens is bags of critical acclaim but no commercial sales. Surely the band's enduring legacy is a huge measure of success?
"I agree. An annoying false narrative has grown around the band. A strangling moss that obscures somewhat, all the good music we made. I always think of the band as successful. We came from a small house in Brisbane in the late 70s, and went out to the world, making music people still love and need to discover."

This year's *Inferno* was met enthusiastically. Is there another solo album in the making?
"Another album? I keep writing, song to song, and hope to make another record one day."

If you could handpick one of Grant's books to receive in your copy of the boxset, which would it be?
"A movie book. He loved cinema and had a fantastic collection of books on US and European cinema. When I first met him, they were the biggest and most interesting part of his books." ●

"AN ANNOYING FALSE NARRATIVE HAS GROWN AROUND THE BAND. A STRANGLING MOSS THAT OBSCURES ALL THE GOOD MUSIC WE MADE"

STEVE DOUBLE

Dark Shadows

In the mid-90s, DJ Shadow ushered in a new breed of expansive, emotive hip-hop, revealing himself to be a connoisseur cratedigger in the process. He tells **Felix Rowe** about his brooding and apocalyptic new double album, owning one of world's largest record collections and a surprising agnosticism towards vinyl

The man on the other end of the phone may be sitting in an idyllic, leafy San Francisco suburb, but dark clouds are gathering overhead. As we speak, the political atmosphere on both sides of the Atlantic is positively incendiary. If the daily headlines are to be believed, civilisation is teetering on the precipice. But while humankind seems hell-bent on self-sabotage, nature is taking the opportunity to fight back.

"I live in Northern California," says DJ Shadow (or Josh Davis to his mum), "and we now have horrific wildfires every year, where growing up we just didn't. Everyone on the planet is experiencing different things. I mean, I'm seeing Venice is 45% flooded today. Yeah, so this is stuff that's happening to us as a species and it's like, 'Right, OK, we've got to get our shit together now!'"

But dark times often lead to compelling art, and Shadow's response is to capture the mood on acetate. The result isn't always an easy listen. Double album, *Our Pathetic Age*, is a dark, brooding testament to the times, announced by a foreboding bass drone like an air-raid siren signalling the apocalypse.

Divided into distinct 'suites', the first instrumental and the second a guest-heavy set, a recurring theme is the tussle between human and technological 'progress' and the natural world we inhabit. At times, the result is akin to a modem being put through a blender.

DJ Shadow's new double album, *Our Pathetic Age*, is a call for humankind to get its shit together

“I can’t shut off my ear, so if there’s music playing it’s really difficult for me to have a conversation. My ear goes right to the music”

Juggernaut is particularly brutal in its pummelling digital onslaught. It’s notably charged for a suite of instrumental music.

“An analogy would be something like other artists who I don’t consider to be political but have something that’s politically leaning,” says Shadow. “But I don’t consider this to be a political record, I consider it to be a humanistic record. And I think there’s a big difference, in that Sly And The Family Stone did *There’s A Riot Goin’ On*, Prince did *Sign ‘O’ The Times*… Look at any artist who’s been around for several decades and you’ll find that at some point they felt compelled to acknowledge that it’s an extraordinary time, whether good or bad. And that’s how I feel. For me to sit down and make a record that’s not influenced by what’s going on would be strange.”

But there’s a glimmer of light within the darkness. *Firestorm* provides a welcome moment of respite. And the more traditional hip-hop second half, while still laced with paranoia over the influence of social media logarithms and the threat of drone warfare, finds time to tap its foot.

A graduate of the early-90s instrumental hip-hop movement (one of the earliest uses of the term ‘trip-hop’ was to describe his music), DJ Shadow burst into the public consciousness with 1996’s seminal *Endtroducing*. The landmark album, which features a photo of Sacramento’s Rare Records on the cover, is now regarded a modern classic. Created almost entirely from sampled records, the 19-year-old Shadow used what limited equipment he could get his hands on to build a sophisticated soundscape, clearly inspired by hip-hop, while taking the genre in a more emotive, cinematic direction. UNKLE’s James Lavelle (on whose Mo’ Wax label it was released) recently spoke to *Long Live Vinyl*, comparing it to *The Dark Side Of The Moon* in its emotional depth and the way in which it transcends genre. The sleeper hit made DJ Shadow a star of sorts, albeit a pretty reluctant one.

“I didn’t grow up wanting to be an entertainer,” he tells us. “I didn’t crave the limelight, I was just a music enthusiast. After *Endtroducing* came out, I was booked for a big run of festival dates and I just cancelled all of them because I was scared. And over the course of the following year, I just went, ‘You’ve got to figure this out, because if you aren’t willing to put yourself out there, to honour the

Learning To Let Go

DJ Shadow has never been a vinyl trophy hunter, remaining more of an opportunist who makes the most of what comes his way. But is there one record he could never part with?

"Actually, a couple of years ago, I gave away the most expensive record I ever bought to a friend of mine. It was an acetate of an unreleased soul-funk album from a group from Ohio. It was just something I felt I wanted to do. And it was an incredibly cathartic thing, because I've often wondered at times if collecting has a hold on me. It was really interesting to me to monitor how I felt about it in the moment, and then the next day, and then two weeks later, then a month later." As he speaks, he grows ever more wistful over the one he let go.

"I never really regretted it," he says a little unconvincingly. "It's not something I would do just indiscriminately. I did it for a reason and it felt good."

DJ Shadow's sixth studio album features collaborations with Run The Jewels, Raekwon and Nas

music you've made, then how can anyone really invest themselves in what you're doing?' Playing live isn't something that comes natural to me, at all, but it's something I've learned to be able to do. Now, I'm able to enjoy it."

SOUND IS SOUND

Just as important was his insistence on ever moving forwards creatively. "Doing the same thing over and over is not interesting to me. After *The Private Press*, I went, 'Well, that's the best I can do limiting myself just to samples'. So, it no longer matters to me whether a kick drum is sampled from a dusty 45, sourced from YouTube, a live kick drum that I recorded, a drum machine or whatever.

"Sound is sound, and once I allowed that concept to permeate the songwriting, it just became more about, 'OK, what sort of sonic texture am I looking for?' And then, it's kinda evolved to, 'OK, is it more emotionally resonant to have two trumpets harmonise with each other or a French horn and a trumpet?' Trying to understand things that other people have known about for centuries. But, in some cases I just want a rugged, head-nodding hip-hop beat or a mean sounding post-dubstep electronic beat. It just depends on the mood."

Mood is everything to Shadow, whose albums take the listener on a journey of peaks and troughs, displaying a real sense of musicality and an emotional arc reminiscent of a film score. It's a feat all the more impressive considering his magpie approach of collecting a disparate array of sounds and then spinning them into something new.

"I'm a fan of music first and foremost, a collector. I listen to music a lot. I can't shut off my ear, so if there's music playing it's really difficult for me to have a conversation. My ear goes right to the music. I've discovered all forms of music outside of hip-hop and soul kind of backwards, in the sense that I didn't really allow myself to listen to music outside of those genres until later. But I like to discover things in my own time and my own space. Whether it's synthesiser music from the 70s or blues music from the 50s or whatever, I'm approaching it because it came up in my normal experience of listening to records... I don't really like to be force-fed whatever is popular. Even as a kid, I was raised to be media resistant and even though I was aware of what was happening at the time, I tended to like things that I felt were being ignored, and at the time that included hip-hop."

In the build-up to *Our Pathetic Age*, Shadow released a series of origin stories for key tracks on the album. These rare insights into the producer's creative process give a real sense of the delights of the consummate cratedigger, continuously wading through his finds, occasionally stumbling upon a gem, being drawn in by an unusual texture, beat or turn of phrase. Inevitably, it means enduring a few duds en route, but everything is given a listen, even if it takes him 30 years to get round to it.

"I was dropping the needle on an Isley Brothers album, and it's probably a record I picked up in the mid-80s and never listened to since. You know, as a DJ I think it's important to constantly give yourself a little refresher, especially things that I've looked at a million times and kind of went, 'Nah!'" He makes a dismissive sound, then laughs.

Stern outlook: Is this really the face of a man who owns in the region of 60,000 records?

"But for whatever reason that copy came up in the rotation of some stuff I was going through and I was like, 'OK, well its moment has arrived, let me give it a spin!' And I went, 'Oh yeah! Wow, I never ever knew where this sample came from!' You're bound to discover something you never heard in that way, or maybe you weren't sophisticated enough at the time. But, I mean, there's so much stuff out there, famous catalogues of music that I really don't know much about to be totally honest. I'm sure it's the type of thing where some people would think, 'What's wrong with you?'"

THE ULTIMATE COLLECTOR

It's a problem many *Long Live Vinyl* readers (and by default their other halves) will contend with: how and where to store their record collection. For DJ Shadow, owner of one of the world's largest record collections (estimated over a decade ago at around 60,000 records), it becomes a question of philosophy. But firstly, what does that many records even look like?

"They're just around. I mean, I've never stopped collecting, so I don't know what the number is, it's just a genuine process. I definitely had a palpable sense in the 90s and early part of the 2000s – there was a window and records were around, they were plentiful, they were cheap and I used to just do buying trips and buy up as much as I could. Hopefully not junk, but I was active and in the process of doing that I just ended up with a lot. It's fortunate because now I can just go through it all at my own pace. I'm glad I did it!"

But that sounds like a big responsibility. We're imagining a comprehensive cataloguing system, librarians behind a desk directing you to colour-coded sleeves, separated by genre, era… "Actually, until I was about 40, it was just chaos! And then a good friend basically came over and said, 'You need to sort your shit out!'" He laughs. "And so that's kind of what I've been doing. I spend about an hour to two hours every day just cleaning stuff up, getting it properly sleeved."

Ready to quash any 'hoarder' accusations, he acknowledges the emotional hold of collecting and the danger of pursuing the activity to its ultimate conclusion.

"The longer you do it, you realise it's absolutely a fool's conceit. There's no way to have everything. I think the people who think they can really don't know how much music was put out in any particular era, there's just too much of it!"

And part of that realisation means occasionally parting with the odd record. "I do these pop-up stores in LA once a year, I've done four of them now, where I let go of duplicates. It's just a way of keeping it moving. I never want my collection to just be entombed, eight floors below the surface of the earth in some vault somewhere. To me, that's useless. I think it's much better to keep the music circulating and keep everything out there."

▶

Shadow on stage at the Sónar festival in Barcelona, 2017

"I've never really been that compelled to pay $100 for a reissue just because it has fancy coloured vinyl or whatever"

For all the tangible emotional attachment associated with owning 'stuff' and the excitement of unearthing the hidden treasures in that next crate, Shadow's approach is rooted in a cool pragmatism.

"I don't know, it's like when people over-romanticise vinyl. I mean, I've never really been that compelled to pay $100 for a reissue just because it has fancy coloured vinyl or whatever. I collect vinyl simply because it was the primary duplicated device for all this human endeavour for 100 years. If it was some other material or it was a square instead of a circle, that's what I'd be collecting. Yes, vinyl is elegant in its form and the way it's done and all that, but if it was a different type of medium, I'd be collecting that in the same way I also collect cassettes and CDs. It's just vinyl was around for so much longer and there's so much more music on it."

So is he amused by talk of a vinyl revival and the modern obsession with vintage gear?

"It doesn't offend me. I get it all, and certainly there have been moments when things like vintage gear seemed really fascinating, because you're seeing it for the first time out of time. I wasn't around when mellotrons came out, so the first time I ever got my hands on one it was a lot of fun. But, yeah, I don't know. Everybody has their own path. I do think sometimes people can miss the point a bit when they zero in on the technology or the medium, rather than the music itself." ●

DJ Shadow's* Our Pathetic Age *is released via Mass Appeal Records and is out now

Sound Of The Truth

A nostalgic DJ Shadow gets up to scratch

"*The Message* by Grandmaster Flash And The Furious Five, that's probably the first real rap song I heard. It was what I was looking for. It just sounded like truth. A completely different way of relating to the world. Those early days of hearing sampling and scratching, there was something hypnotic about it. I couldn't put my finger on it, but it's something about repetition. At that time, it wasn't anything anyone had ever heard. It's not playing the same rhythm, it is the same rhythm, the same recording of the same rhythm looped over and over to where you hear certain qualities of the snare and the kick and the space between them. It's the studio environment that gets crunched down to 12-bit or 8-bit, you know, the sampling at that time, it turns it into such a strange sound. It was so otherworldly, hearing scratching. I was obsessed with trying to understand what the sounds were. I eventually realised that so many of those sounds are associated with the stab of the beginning of the break beat, which goes all the way back to the early 70s and people like Kool Herc and later Bambaataa and Afrika Islam. So, what attracted me to sample is the edit's core and the edit's crux. And the reason it was first embraced by hip-hop is because hip-hop was the perfect culture and the perfect music to utilise that technology."

Available in WHSmith and all good newsagents or online at anthem-publishing.com/sunrecords

PLUS EXCLUSIVE SUN RECORDS FAN PACK WITH FOUR ART CARDS AVAILABLE (WHILE STOCKS LAST)

FROM THE MAKERS OF CLASSIC POP VINTAGE ROCK LONG LIVE VINYL

“I’m someone who cares about detail. Even when I make stuff just for fun, I put work into it. It’s hard for me just to be light about it.”

Released in late 2019, *All Mirrors* is the fourth album in an ever-more varied catalogue from an artist who defies easy categorisation. **Rob Haywood** meets Angel Olsen and discovers that the devil is in the detail…

CAMERON McCOOL

Angel Olsen is fast becoming recognised as a multi-talented artist who knows what she wants and how to present it. If taking control of her music videos, starting work on a book, overseeing a sound installation in Brooklyn and being in charge of minute touring details such as the stage lighting aren't enough, she recently recorded two disparate versions of her new album, while in the past she has even written her own fact sheets to give to interviewers and reviewers.

Now based in North Carolina, Olsen grew up in St. Louis before moving to Chicago. As a teen, it was the age of CDs, but she began making cassettes and collecting vinyl. While she can now be lauded as the queen of the streaming age, she owns crates of vinyl and enjoys putting out 12" collections of cover versions. It's these polar extremes that in part make her so interesting. She's also equally at home touring solo or with a band.

"I decided I was interested in playing with a band forever and playing alone forever," she says. "At least one solo tour a year would be really fun." Olsen is speaking to *LLV* during a break from her tour to promote new album *All Mirrors*. After a decade of surprising listeners with shifts between country, folk, indie, grunge and rock, the new album is drenched in strings, synths and a twisting sense of cinematic drama rarely witnessed this side of Kate Bush.

I still buy vinyl and used to date a guy who owned a record store. I still really like his record store...

On reflection: Angel Olsen's fourth album is her most personal yet

Angel Olsen released *All Mirrors*, her fourth album, or fifth if you count the 2017 compilation *Phases* in the autumn of 2019. It contained some of her most personal songs, written in the aftermath of the break-up of a long-term relationship. It proved to be an album that Olsen told Apple Music was "so fucking emotional and hard for me to make."

Both the album's title track and second single, *Lark*, showed casual listeners the way Olsen was heading. With a brooding atmosphere bleeding through, the Jherek Bischoff-arranged strings and synths framed the mirrors that reoccurred across the record. They show Olsen looking at her life, her relationships and her friendships, more often with loss and change at the heart of what is reflected back.

All Mirrors started life very differently as a solo, acoustic collection of songs closer to Olsen's earlier output. However, working with returning producer John Congleton (he'd previously overseen 2014's *Burn Your Fire For No Witness*), the record took on a new life and a much fuller sound. Once the fully produced album was complete, the entire project was going to be a double album, with the original demos released at the same time. Olsen changed her mind and now on tour she's having to recreate another version of the songs with two strings players rather than the dozen or so that played on the album.

"Making the live version of this is like making a third record," she explains. "We have two string players who play through pedals and I play some organ, and I have a friend who plays piano and synths as well. I got the band together for a few rehearsals and then we added the strings. Most of the rehearsal time was for this new material, but also adding strings to my old songs. That was the hardest part, applying the same textures to old songs without changing them too much." The resultant live show has been gathering rave

RICK KERN/GETTY

CAMERON McCOOL

reviews in North America before it heads to Europe at the start of this year.

"I was going to do this as a double album," she explains, "but when it was all finished, it made sense to come out with this one. It was interesting the way the songs changed."

After the breakthrough success of her 2016 album *My Woman*, Olsen's touring band went several different ways and she took a break by releasing a compilation of outtakes, covers and B-sides. Ever the workaholic, she embarked on a solo tour to promote the record and found herself writing new material as she toured. "I love listening to The Cars, and I love rock and roll music," Olsen recalls, "[but] when I went on a solo tour when *Phases* was out, I was writing quite a lot and I got to a place where I realised the material I was writing didn't fit that background. I needed to allow my writing to wander and for music to come along for it rather than trying to write a rock and roll song or a throwback song."

Heavenly Records

INTRODUCING FIVE COLLECTABLE ANGEL OLSEN RECORDS TO ADD TO YOUR WISHLIST

STRANGE CACTI

BATHETIC RECORDS

Originally a cassette release, various versions of this have been issued on vinyl. The original 12" version, with a print run of only 500, is the most sought after.

DISCOGS £38

SLEEPWALKER

SIXTEEN TAMBOURINES

Japanese 7" from 2013, which came complete with a paper crane.

DISCOGS £25

OTHERS' BLUES

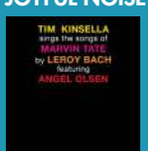
JAGJAGUWAR

Covers of Roky Erickson and Bruce Springsteen on 7" vinyl from 2016.

DISCOGS £15

SINGS THE SONGS OF MARVIN TATE

JOYFUL NOISE



Olsen joins Tim Kinsella and Wilco's Leroy Bach for an album of covers. Limited to 1,000 hand-numbered copies.

DISCOGS £15

THREE COVERS

JAGJAGUWAR

Olsen says she has around 25 covers recorded for future release. Three of them (Dolly Parton, Timi Yuro and The Mekons) found their way onto this 2019 12" for Rough Trade.

DISCOGS £12

As the new songs took shape, she wanted an adventurous approach. So Congleton was brought in to produce the lush new arrangements. It was important for her to trust these songs to someone else and Olsen confesses that she had a hard time letting go of her songs to the producer. "All I wanted was to be a part of the final editing process [this time]," she explains. "I do trust John, but there were certain songs where I wasn't really sure if the textures were what I wanted. We had to re-do *Too Easy* at some point. [John] was very reassuring and we just kept collecting more material. I'm sure there was a hell of a lot of strings he didn't use, but the way he manipulated them is probably what he enjoys about his job. When everyone is out of the room and he can manipulate stuff."

Though the original versions of these songs were held back for now, they will be released at some point, possibly with more tracks that didn't make this version. It's not beyond the realms of possibility that a solo tour would follow either.

A CHANGE OF PATH

All Mirrors is a major departure from the guitar pop of *My Woman*, or the country-tinged *Burn Your Fire For No Witness*. Like her changing musical path, Olsen has moved through three major locations in her life. She relocated to Chicago in 2007 after growing up in St. Louis, but she now calls Asheville, North Carolina home. She's recently bought a house and enjoys the fact she can use her home as a retreat from the business, and live a 'normal' life of daily chores and grocery trips. She has a favourite local vinyl store there, Harvest Records.

Back in St. Louis, Angel Olsen would play her earliest gigs outside a local record store called Vintage Vinyl. "I tried to get a job there," she recalls. "I did my vinyl shopping there. I would go there all the time when I was a kid. I still buy vinyl and I used to date a guy who owned a record store. I still really like his record store even though the relationship didn't work out."

For an artist who first came to be noticed around a decade ago, it's perhaps surprising that her first release was on cassette. *Strange Cacti* was issued on Bathetic Records (which Olsen describes as "an experimental ambient noise label") on tape before later vinyl issues came to the market. But tapes were her first love. "I had a car with a tape player," she says. "A lot of my friends had old cars, so we'd make mixtapes and drive around Chicago listening to them."

While this use of cassette tapes might seem anachronistic, *All Mirrors* has been picked up for promotion by various streaming services. Apple Music provides Olsen's own song-by-song notes for the album, which is something she embraces. "I'm someone who cares about detail," she explains. "Even when I make stuff just for fun, I put work into it. It's hard for me just to be light about it."

Spotify has also been really supportive of the record. "I've no idea why," she laughs. It was Spotify that approached Olsen about staging an art installation, which led to 'Behind All Mirrors' in Brooklyn.

"They wanted to recreate an audience's perspective of a breakdown of *All Mirrors*," recalls Olsen. "They got our friend [Sean Cook], who had worked on *All Mirrors* to unmix the tracks; starting with the final recording and breaking it down to the demo. You sort of walk through the installation and different things happen that are related to the *All Mirrors* video. Just a one-off experience, a way to get fans engaged in a neat way."

The *All Mirrors* video was a black and white affair, with Olsen playing various different characters. The follow-up video for *Lark* was very different. Directed by Ashley Cooper, the film again showed different versions of Olsen, this time running through woodland, being filmed on hillsides by drones, on the beach with wild horses and giving an impassioned performance outside in the rain.

"It needed a whole lot of different landscapes and emotions and feelings," says Olsen. "It was a pain in the ass! I wanted to go to the beach and see the wild horses and I wanted to have drones on a hill. I wanted to levitate at some point, but we dropped it. I didn't know I'd be running over and over in a field. It was an exhausting but rewarding experience. It rained three of the days we were filming and I did this crazy performance outside in the rain with the truck behind me. I said, 'How did you feel about that Ashley?' and she said, 'I think we got it'. I said, 'I think I'm going to pour myself a drink,' because that was not the answer I wanted. The next day, she told me she was afraid that we'd lost all the footage in the rain." Luckily, the footage from the $17,000 camera was recovered and made the final cut.

Olsen has introduced an increased sense of theatre to her live performances

JORDI VIDAL/REDFERNS/GETTY

> **When you're dressed up for a role, you can help other people lose themselves as well**

Olsen has also mentioned that she'd like to write a book. "It's something that I'd like to do," she admits. "I'd like to write about my life and my family, things that I've experienced that I can't put into song." She might struggle to find the time to fit in an autobiography while she is having such a creative phase musically. A backlog of unreleased material and touring for the foreseeable future will keep her more than busy. Now she is specific about how the band are viewed on stage.

"I don't know if I can afford to do it in Europe, but over the last two records I've grown to value the presentation of the band," she says. "I've been putting work into the live show rather than just wearing whatever I want, bringing almost a theatrical vibe but not at the expense of joking around and checking in with the audience. It feels right when we're all dressed up and ready to be there, and when you're dressed up for a role you can help other people lose themselves as well."

COMPLETE YOUR LONG LIVE VINYL COLLECTION

ORDER ONLINE AT anthem-publishing.com/llv
OR CALL UK 0844 856 0642 **OVERSEAS** +44 (0) 1371 853 609

FOREVER CHANGES

Better men: (from l to r) Michael Campbell, Liam Fray and Daniel 'Conan' Moores

"I'm trying to be a better man… whatever that is." The chorus of Courteeners' recent single *Better Man* summarises singer Liam Fray's attempts at self-improvement and the impostor syndrome he feels about his band's status as one of the last rock & roll stadium outfits left standing. Fray tells **John Earls** how these issues informed their dazzling new album

Courteeners' new album *More. Again. Forever.* should win over many doubters. It's retained the trio's gift for melody and singer Liam Fray's empathetic lyrics, while being bolder, adding in spoken-word disco, lithe funk and IDLES-style punk. But Fray is wary of overselling his band's sixth record. "I'm supposed to say in interviews, 'We've completely reinvented ourselves and I'm a new man!'," he laughs over a pint of IPA in a near-deserted craft pub near Manchester Piccadilly station. "But I don't know if we have or if I am. All we've got is 10 new songs."

Since previous album *Mapping The Rendezvous* in 2016, Courteeners have played to 50,000 fans at a homecoming Manchester show in Heaton Park, headlined festivals and cemented their reputation as one of the few British guitar bands whose fanbase is still growing. But, 12 years after debut album *St. Jude*, Fray knew that was no longer enough. He scrapped an album's worth of material after *Mapping The Rendezvous*, admitting: "I was writing songs for 'the fanbase', knowing as I was writing them the songs weren't good enough and thinking, 'You're better than this'."

For the first time, Fray sought outside help, writing with Rich Turvey, a producer for Blossoms and She Drew The Gun who Fray knew through The Coral singer James Skelly. "I seem to have this reputation as someone who doesn't really like doing anything with other people," says Fray. He looks slightly baffled, before shaking his head. "I'd never really said no to any offers, but if you don't put yourself out there, no-one is going to come banging your door down. Before working with Rich, I did think in the back of my mind, 'Don't write with anyone else, don't try to ask for help'. And being with Rich was brilliant, so cathartic. We wrote four songs in six days."

Asking for help is a key thread in *More. Again. Forever.*, whose title was inspired by *The Recovering*, a book on sobriety by Leslie Jamison which Fray discovered while on tour in Oregon. During our three hours, Fray has a couple of pints and admits, "I can have a laugh and a joke about drinking", but he's increasingly aware of the trouble alcohol can bring. "If I have a drink, I'm not getting anything done," he says. "If I'm hungover, maybe I can write, but when the drink is out, it's 'Put those notebooks away'. I love a drink, but I love having a serious detox too. Maybe that's about control, but I do enjoy having a clear head. I gave up for seven weeks at the start of 2019 and I think it's something I'll do every year – a lot of this record was written then, and that's telling. The clouds dissipated and I thought, 'I can do this'."

If Fray likes a pint, he also loves reading, his voracious book habit leading to novelist Emma Jane Unsworth writing a story Courteeners' videos for *More. Again. Forever.* are based around. He also eulogises Florence Williams' self-help book *The Nature Fix*, revealing he and his bandmates, guitarist Conan Moores and drummer Michael Campbell's main way of staying in touch away from the studio and touring is going on nature walks. "People clock us and go, 'What are they doing here?'," Fray laughs. "It's a good way to spend time together and I'm a massive walker, a National Trust member, the works. Half an hour in green space, everything just lifts a bit."

90% BOUNCING

Being a rambler is not the image you'd expect from the laddish stereotype that unfairly still clings to Courteeners. Their gigs are a communal celebration where everyone is welcome, but they're also a frenzy. "Our crowds are so manic that, sometimes, me and Campbell are guilty of worrying too much when the crowd aren't all big limbs," says Fray. "If fans are bouncing for 90% of the show, as soon as they stop there's a tendency to think, 'Oh, they don't like that one' and fuck a song off, rather than recognising that some great songs you just can't bounce to."

For the first time, Courteeners didn't take a break from touring before going straight into working on the new album. It made trying to change up the sound difficult. "When you play a festival, you see people go, 'Waaargh!'," notes Fray, doing a fine impression of a fan bouncing away. "Then you go into the studio the following week. You're trying to tear up the rulebook, but it's hard not to think, 'That festival went so well, shall we just write 10 more versions of *Are You In Love With A Notion?* or 10 more *Cavortings*?' That was a constant struggle, but I trust in our audience, that they'll see that, at the core, these new songs are still about sincerity and openness. You think, 'Fuck, is this song too different?', but then you realise, 'Well, we can still play *Cavorting* too!'" Fray laughs as he jokily summarises Courteeners' new stance: "We're not writing songs to get on Kellogg's adverts. Although I would take that."

Sincerity and openness has been key since Fray gave up a creative writing degree at Salford University when Courteeners began

TAKING IT ON THE CHIN

Courteeners' albums have always been planned as two sides of a record, even though their debut album *St. Jude* was released in 2008, before the vinyl revival kicked in.

"If you line our records up, you'll see they're quite similar in how they're meant to affect the listener," says Liam Fray. "For me, the biggest track on our albums is always the opening song on Side Two: you need another big tune there. Track five is always a slow song to end the first side, then track six has to be a really big punch again. That's certainly true of *Previous Parties* on the new record."

What does Fray make of Go-Betweens singer Robert Forster's theory that bands hide their weakest song on an album as the penultimate track? There's a huge laugh from the singer when he realises the catchy *Take It On The Chin* is song nine on *More. Again. Forever.* before he states: "I know where he's coming from. I don't want to fully agree with him, but *Take It On The Chin* is the most indie song on the new record. The solo is good. The lyrics are good. But I'll give Robert that. If pushed, out of the 10 songs, yeah: *Take It On The Chin* excites me least."

Fray's own introduction to vinyl came via his mum's collection of Beatles singles, which she gave to Fray on his 21st birthday in 2006. He revisited them recently when Courteeners producer Joe Cross came to his house. "That was a cool night," says Fray. "The romance of two sides of vinyl felt really special, choosing which single to play next."

"I'M SUPPOSED TO SAY IN INTERVIEWS 'WE'VE COMPLETELY REINVENTED OURSELVES AND I'M A NEW MAN!'"

The new album was inspired by excess, self-improvement and a little bit of bouncing

Mouth almighty: Fray had earnt the reputation as Manchester's second mouthiest Liam

"I KNOW WE CAN'T JUST KEEP DOING ALBUM SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE. THE BAND ARE DOING GREAT, BUT WE NEED TO KEEP ON OUR TOES"

to take off. He can only think of one character study song – 2014's *Has He Told You That He Loves You Yet?* – with the rest of Courteeners' music being at least loosely autobiographical.

Fray's thoughtfulness was initially overlooked, partially thanks to the cocky interview persona the singer adopted at the start of Courteeners' career. "I've always been self-reflective," says Fray. "But you're expected to go from the insular, close-knit bond you've got with your friends in the band to speaking about that to the world. And that's a totally different job. At first, it's 'Can you be open and honest and write songs that mean something?' and then you're told, 'Can you look good and sell it?' At the beginning, I was mouthy, annoying and I'd get leathered, giving the press this creation they thought I was. I'd read our interviews back and be heartbroken, thinking 'That's not me! Why am I slagging off other bands? We should be supporting each other'. But the truth is, I didn't just fall for that, I dived in headfirst. And I've been clawing that back ever since."

Fray is friends with a handful of other musicians: Blossoms, Miles Kane, Hurts, DMA's, but that's a recent development. During Courteeners' early career, none of his close friends outside his bandmates were in

CARLA SPEIGHT/REDFERNS/GETTY

music. That didn't help his self-doubt at being a musician one iota. "I struggle with impostor syndrome quite a bit," he admits. "I shared a flat with a close mate who had a proper 9-to-5 job, had his head screwed on. If you're in the arts, you're afforded the luxury of going out on a Tuesday and getting wrecked, and I'd constantly be on at him – 'Let's go out! Let's go out!' But that nags at you as well, knowing that you're not being responsible and thinking, 'When am I going to grow up?'. I started this band at uni to avoid getting a proper job, and I'm still in that headspace, thinking, 'When am I going to get a proper job?'"

If anything, Courteeners' huge headline show at Heaton Park last June only brought home how fragile the band's success is: they can play to 50,000 people in their hometown, but they only did their first arena show in London last November, at the 10,000-capacity Olympia: Courteeners aren't as yet a national stadium band, let alone an international one.

"If you're doing 50 stadium shows around the world, like Muse or the Arctics, it's fine if two are iffy," Fray reasons. "But if you've got one show that big and that's iffy, you've fucked it. There's so much riding on that one show, it's insane. And after a huge show, you might not have anything to do for six weeks. What are you meant to do then? I wind myself up during that time off and I hate it. I'd rather do 40 2,000-capacity gigs. If we weren't playing Heaton Park, I'd be playing at The Dry Bar in Manchester on a Wednesday night and have no qualms about that whatsoever."

And if ever Liam Fray really wants to doubt himself, he can just go to a guitar shop. He isn't a gear head when it comes to making music, stemming back to his days of being sneered at in guitar shops. "It's still like that now," he smiles. "They recognise me and still treat me like shit: 'Er, have you tried this pedal here? That might help'." He laughs into his IPA, adopting a pleading tone. "Come on lads, let it go. I'm doing my best here!"

REALLY? THAT ONE?

It should be noted that Fray's doubts are conversational rather than a stream of neuroses. He says he's always found it easy to talk about his worries as well as put them in his songs. Certainly, for a band of Courteeners' stature, there's no sense of Fray having his guard up or that he's desperate to sell his artistic vision: he's happy to let Courteeners' songs do that, as content talking about his favourite comedians (Nish Kumar, Sara Pascoe, Diane Morgan) and favourite podcasts (in-depth arts conversation *The Two Shot Podcast*, lifestyle programme *The Tim Ferriss Show*, 90s football nostalgia *Quickly Kevin*) as he is the minutiae of *More. Again. Forever.*.

Fray's burning ambition to be a global superstar ended when Courteeners' second album *Falcon* stalled at No. 6 in 2010. "Before our second record, I'd thought, 'Maybe we can be this much bigger next'," he recalls. "When it didn't happen, I realised that, so long as we can keep making records and doing shows, that's a fantastic position to be in. How successful you are isn't really down to the quality of your songwriting."

Fray knew the new album's disco-inflected lead single *Heavy Jacket* would be a big tune live, but he's been proved wrong on that score before. "I thought *Welcome To The Rave* off our third album *Anna* would be massive and it just didn't click," he shrugs. "On *Concrete Love*, the record after, I thought *White Horses* would be our Foals moment – massive tune, big riffs. Didn't happen. But there are some songs people ask for in the set which I feel a bit, 'Really? That one?'."

If he's stopped second-guessing Courteeners' fanbase, Fray is aware of the effect his music can have on them, especially since the haunting *International* on *Concrete Love* was written when "I was right at the bottom, totally in the pit." Fray continues: "Four or five people on Twitter have since written to me: 'That song saved my life' and that stops me in my tracks. When you read that, you think 'Just keep writing like that. Be vulnerable, let your guard down' and say to people, 'It's alright to feel like this'. That's better than holding onto stuff."

Having gone through the mill to get to *More. Again. Forever.*, Fray appears unlikely to be so frustrated before album seven. He wants to maybe do side-projects – he and DMA's are talking about making "a dancey record" together and Fray would also love to work with Bipolar Sunshine – or write a coffee-table book based on Courteeners' lyrics.

"I know we can't just keep on doing album seven, eight, nine and 10," he reasons, finishing his beer before meeting up with the band for rehearsals. "The band are doing great, but we need to keep on our toes. What we're doing now, I already know we can do this. So let's try something else. Why not learn the cello? Or the trombone? My grandad was a painter who did calligraphy and I'd love to try that."

There's another ready smile. "Trying new stuff never hurt anyone, did it?" That right there is the essence of Courteeners' new record: trying new stuff because, well, wouldn't you? It's worked out brilliantly for them. Whatever happens next, it won't be more of the same again forever. ●

More. Again. Forever. ***is out on 17 January. Courteeners headline TRNSMT festival on 10-12 July***

COURTEENER COLLECTOR

Liam Fray admits he only buys around five albums on vinyl each year. "It has to be bands I love, like The National or IDLES," he states. "That's because I've had a brilliant turntable for 18 months, but I've still not set it up. How sad is that? I bought it with a friend who really knows his turntables, but I couldn't even tell you what make mine is. When I finally get time to set it up, then the vinyl is coming back out."

Ironically, Fray stopped buying vinyl once Courteeners began to succeed. "Once you start touring, the cool single you've found in a record shop gets shoved down someone's chair or squashed by the books you've brought on the road," Fray laughs. "I've got loads of rare stuff from just before the band started – first pressings of The Libertines albums, some rare 12"s by The Strokes. When The Strokes first appeared, I was mesmerised by everything about them, from the artwork to how cool and New York their names were: Fabrizio Moretti, Nikolai Fraiture… Their names are just ridiculous. Not only was their guitarist called Albert Hammond, he was Albert Hammond Junior. I was in awe of everything about them."

The teenage Fray naturally collected CDs as well as vinyl, going to Manchester record shop Vinyl Exchange with future Courteeners guitarist Conan Moores as a teenager. "Those weekly record shopping trips were the kind of things you formed a band around," Fray remembers. "Desperately hoping they'd have a copy of *Shakermaker* by Oasis and celebrating, 'Yes! I've got one!' when you found the rack."

THE WORLD AT WAR

Field Music have made a concept album exploring the ways in which ripples from the First World War played out through the 20th century and even beyond. **Jonathan Wright** hears exactly why and how they did it

ANDY MARTIN

The guns on the Western Front fell silent on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, 1918. The First World War, a conflict of mechanised barbarism that claimed the lives of 20 million combatants and civilians, and perhaps even more, was finally over.

It's a moment in time captured in the most poignant fashion in a document from the archives of the Imperial War Museums (IWM), a 1919 publication on the subject of munitions by the US War Department. It shows a graph that represents a sound-ranging image based on readings from transducers spread out across the front. The idea was that, by looking at the time difference between a boom hitting each transducer – essentially a glorified oil drum – it was possible to work out where enemy guns were located.

"Incredibly, someone had set their sound-ranging machine away a minute before the

Armistice, so you had this image of a minute of the guns going from 10.59 on the 11th of November, and then a minute afterwards where it's relative silence," explains David Brewis, guitarist, songwriter and one half of the brotherly duo who are the musical mainstays of Field Music.

As to how David and brother Peter, drummer and fellow songwriter, encountered this image, it was because IWM approached the duo to get involved in events to commemorate the aftermath of the First World War.

"For us, we thought, 'Well the sound-ranging image looks like a seismograph in a way'," explains David. "It has six lines, which would have been from the six different transducers. And we thought about, 'OK, well if these vibrating lines stretched out across the next hundred years, what vibrations from the war would they pick up?'"

The result was Field Music's seventh studio LP *Making A New World,* a 19-track song cycle first performed in early 2019 at the IWC sites in Salford and London – a commissioned piece that, now it's been recorded for release, is also Field Music's first concept album, although it wasn't initially intended to be quite so ambitious. "In my mind, we were going to do some sort of freeform performance, to do some music and improvise," recalls Peter. "And then Dave wrote a song. And we were coming across all these stories, and we thought, 'We should really write a few songs'."

This represented a very different approach for the brothers. Rather than writing, in Peter's words, "about ourselves and our immediate thoughts and circumstances surrounding where we live and the time we live in", the project required stories. As Peter puts it, rather than coming up with the kinds of songs John Lennon wrote, songs about how he felt, the duo needed to look to Paul McCartney and the way he is adept at writing songs about characters – think *Eleanor Rigby* or *Paperback Writer.*

"What was important was whose point of view were you telling the story from?" adds David. "And then it becomes personal. It's not us doing a history lecture, it's us trying to imagine a person's point of view, how might someone have felt about it? And when you personalise it like that, I feel like you are just making that opportunity for an emotional connection into the songs."

SONGWRITING PROCESS

How does this work in practice? What kinds of subjects does *New World* tackle? To give just one example, the plaintive ballad *A Change Of Heir* takes as its starting point the work of plastic surgeon Dr Harold Gillies, who developed skin-graft techniques to perform facial repairs on injured servicemen. Later, Gillies became a pioneer in gender-reassignment surgery, performing one of the first male-to-female procedures in 1951, on the racing driver and Spitfire pilot Roberta Cowell. To look at that another way, the lines from the sound-ranging graph spread out in the most surprising ways. Another song, *Only In A Man's World,* tackles the development of sanitary towels.

These were stories the brothers pieced together via "a little bit of background knowledge, a little bit of luck and a lot of scouting round on the internet" allied, says David, to Peter's fondness for Radio 4 documentaries. But there was no room for slacking because the songs had to be fact-checked by IWM. "We got told off a couple of times, but did OK mostly. I think we probably got a B-minus," jokes David.

Which made a change from his schooldays, when history wasn't David's best subject. "I didn't have the patience for it," he says. "I tried to write my GCSE project work from watching the Richard Attenborough film about Gandhi rather than reading any books. So I feel like my old history teacher, Mr Liddle, might finally forgive me for my lack of effort."

THE SHAPE OF THINGS

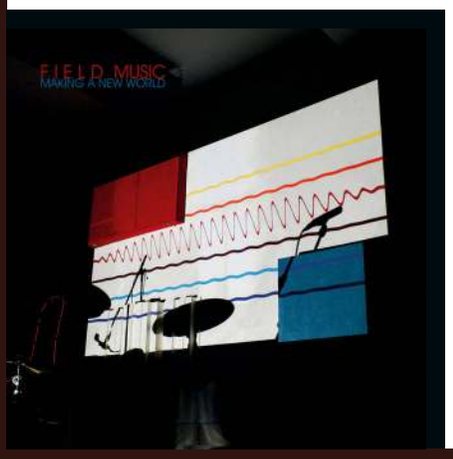
According to David Brewis, after writing *Making A New World,* Field Music came to the conclusion "that the shape of the 20th century grew out of the First World War". He adds: "The First World War is a modern war in so many ways. It felt close. And it felt like the personal repercussions, how it affects people, are still here, even if in so many ways we've moved on."

This shows in the songs, which are sequenced roughly chronologically on the LP, and a few of which we've singled out below better to explain how the album works.

Best Kept Garden deals with Dr Christopher Addison, appointed as minister for reconstruction in 1917 and later Britain's first minister for health. His 'Addison Act', the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919, paved the way for London County Council to build outside of its county jurisdiction, leading in turn to the creation of Becontree housing estate in Essex, where tenants were encouraged to look after their gardens with local competitions.

A Shot To The Arm takes us to neutral Switzerland in 1916, where Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings found the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. The Dada movement is born, questioning the orthodoxies of western art and thought. Their radical work finds an echo in 1971, when American performance artist Chris Burden arranges to have a friend shoot him in the arm with a rifle from 15 feet as part of the work *Shoot,* conceived as a reaction to the conflict in Vietnam.

A Common Language Pt.2 concerns the first use of the term "shell shock" in a 1915 article in *The Lancet* by experimental psychologist Dr Charles Myers. The debilitating psychological effects of combat will be a recurring theme through the violence of the 20th century. In 1980, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the third edition of the *Diagnostic And Statistical Manual Of Mental Disorders* (DSM-lll), published by the American Psychiatric Association, includes a diagnosis for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



For ***Money Is A Memory*** we're brought face to face with the sheer amount of time it takes for conflict to make its way through the world's financial system. In 1921, Germany is ordered to pay 269 billion gold marks in war reparations. While this debt is later restructured and reduced, it is not until 2010 that Germany, having borrowed heavily from the US to meet its obligations, makes a final payment of $94 million on debts related to reparations.

FIRST PERFORMANCE

Considering the complexities here, it's surprising to learn just how quickly the project came together, with the duo only beginning work in earnest in September 2018, four months ahead of playing the songs live for the first time. There were further complications. The duo wanted the songs to respond to the site of IWM North, which in Peter's words, is a space "like a shattered world, a sphere that's been totally disjointed".

In addition, as with forthcoming dates in February, the first performances of *New World* featured a strong visual element. The band used a percussive track to make sure they didn't miss any cues so that the images on screens behind them, created by guitarist Kevin Dosdale, and the music stayed in sync. As Peter notes wryly of the forthcoming dates: "Once we press the button and go, that's it. We've just got to keep playing."

In short, this was a project built around specifics: a specific deadline, a live performance at specific locations incorporating specific images and text, and a specific subject. Which in itself presented a conundrum for a duo who could be likened to a kind of Mackem Steely Dan for building up songs in the studio: how best to capture these songs for an album?

The answer was for Field Music the live band, David, Peter, Dosdale, Liz Corney on keyboards and Andrew Lowther on bass, to assemble in the duo's new studio (their previous space having been demolished in 2018) and run through the songs, twice, in a single day. Later, the brothers and Corney added overdubs, but in key respects *New World* is a live LP, for all that, in David's words, it's a "dense" piece of work in that there's "lots of detail in the songs".

GOING FORWARD

This begs an important question: for all this is essentially a one-off project, will the process have a dramatic effect on how Field Music develop in the future? It may already have done so. "I feel like the possibilities of what we can write songs about has really broadened," observes David.

"Immediately after recording this, Peter went off on tour for a collaborative album released in January [the eponymous *You Tell Me*, which saw him working with Admiral Fallow's Sarah Hayes] and I wrote a concept album about Donald Trump (School Of Language's *45*). And put that out. So wow, I can really write about anything in my mind. Yeah, I can write a song from Rex Tillerson's perspective, of course I can."

Is he sure he wants to be spending time in the mindset of Trump's former secretary of state? "The song's only three minutes long and then I move out, but that bravery of what can turn into a song is something I really hope will stay with us."

He expects politics to reoccur in future songs. "The kind of political crises that are going on in Britain and the US at the moment, and elsewhere, have coincided with us having kids, which has probably changed our perspective on all of that," he says. "Can we be so blasé about it because this is the world we're bringing our children into? It just seems impossible not to write about it, or at least to try to find a way to write about it. And even though *Making A New World* is about the First World War, it's also in a way about politics now."

But don't expect things to get too serious. Perhaps in part as a reaction to their recent work, there's also a sense that Field Music want to have some fun. The duo have, reveals Peter, returned to their parents' LP collection for inspiration, a collection dominated by "rock guitar bands. Free, Zeppelin, The Beatles, 10cc and Roxy Music".

> "I FEEL LIKE THE POSSIBILITIES OF WHAT WE CAN WRITE SONGS ABOUT HAS REALLY BROADENED"

Field Music want to make an album that, to use an apposite word, riffs off the music they heard as kids. It's an exercise, Peter admits, that has some obvious pitfalls in that "you can't just do a song and make it sound like *All Right Now* without falling into pastiche.

"Mine and Dave's idea is, and we've always had this idea lurking in the background somewhere, how do you take the idea of Free and how do you apply it to our musical language, or somebody else's musical language even? Or how do you look at the musical language of an early 20th-century composer or something like that? How can you make that into a simple, catchy rock song, but that doesn't have those same bluesy tropes, how do you do that?"

Put that way, it sounds quite radical. "Well, we'll see," he says, "we always come up with these daft concepts and it ends up sounding like us." ●

Field Music's* Making A New World *is released via Memphis Industries on 10 January

MASTERS OF WAR

FIVE OF THE BEST SONGS ABOUT THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The Zombies
Butchers Tale (Western Front 1914)
From *Odessey & Oracle*, an LP only latterly recognised as a baroque pop masterpiece, this flopped on its release as a US single. Its lyrics reflected Chris White's interest in 1914-18. It was recorded in one take in July 1967 at Abbey Road.

Siouxsie & The Banshees
Poppy Day
From the Banshees' second LP, *Join Hands*, Siouxsie Sioux intones words from John McCrae's poem *In Flanders Fields*. A disturbing and claustrophobic album opener dominated by John McKay's swirling guitar.

Paul McCartney
Pipes Of Peace
Paul McCartney's paean to not fighting was accompanied by a video that depicted the unofficial 1914 Christmas truce between British and German troops (the subject of The Farm's *All Together Now*, too). A deceptively simple song with a melody that swoops and soars.

Radiohead
Harry Patch (In Memory Of)
This commemoration of the last-surviving combat soldier to serve in the First World War, Henry John Patch (who lived to be 111), started life when Thom Yorke heard Patch on Radio 4.

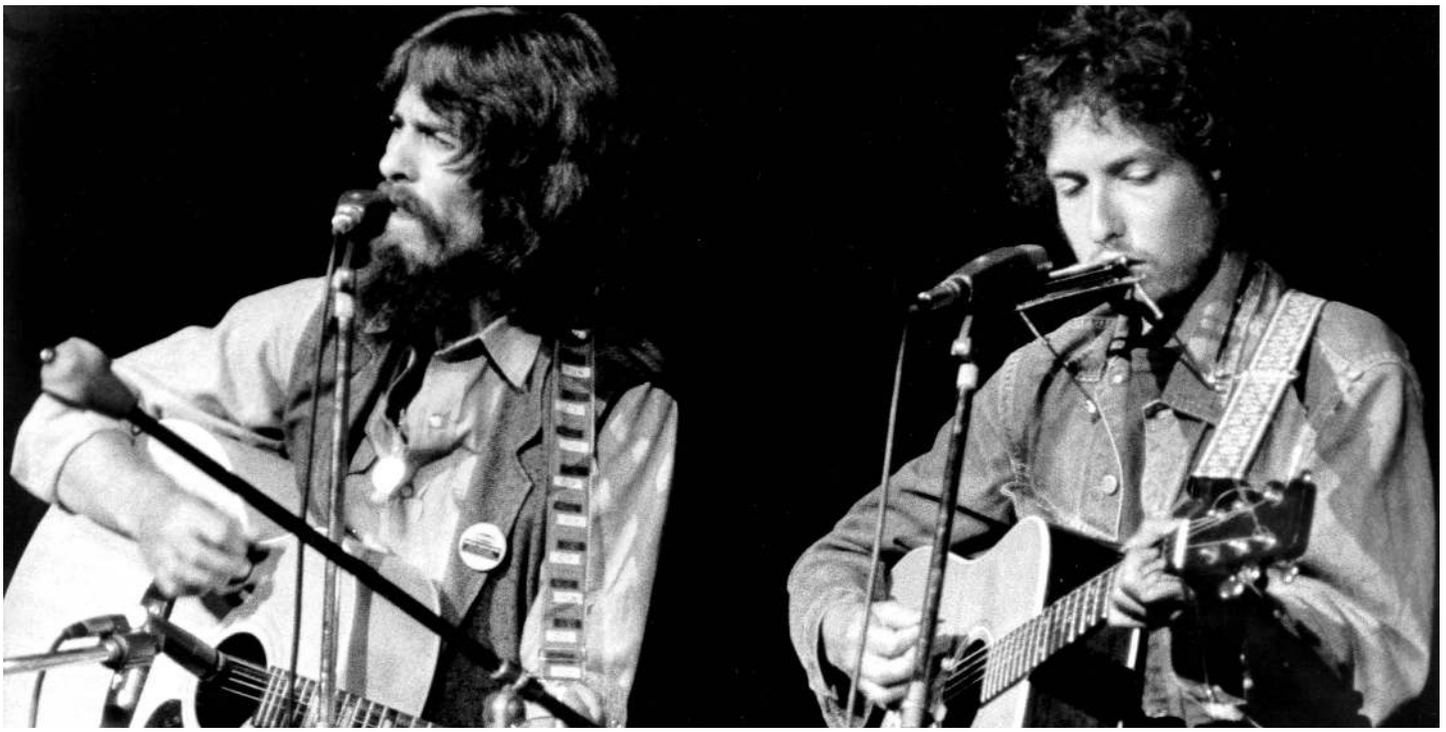
PJ Harvey
On Battleship Hill
Let England Shake now seems prescient in the way it returns so often to the dark side of English nationalism. This is one of the standout tracks, which deals with the notoriously bloody Allied landings at Gallipoli in Turkey.

Don't Look Back

Dylan 1970-79
A Decade Of Reinvention

After exiting the 60s with one of his finest albums, Bob Dylan entered the 70s with one of his worst. Yet over the next 10 years, Dylan embarked on a reinvigorating journey through some troubled times, wearing many masks. Here, some of the key musicians who helped him make eight very different albums, talk **Daniel Dylan Wray** through a remarkable decade

ALVAN MEYEROWITZ/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY



Album #1

SELF PORTRAIT

8 JUNE 1970

CBS 66250

After the brilliance of *Nashville Skyline* ended the 60s… this. A sprawling double album that's essentially an official bootleg, it left Dylan watchers either confused or entirely nonplussed. Some suggest it's a typically contrary act of self-parody, in reality it's a collection of studio leftovers, messy cover versions and sub-par revisits of Dylan's own songs with a handful of originals thrown in. His version of *Blue Moon* is not a highlight, but the take on Alfred Frank Beddoe's *Copper Kettle* most certainly is.

DISCOGS £10

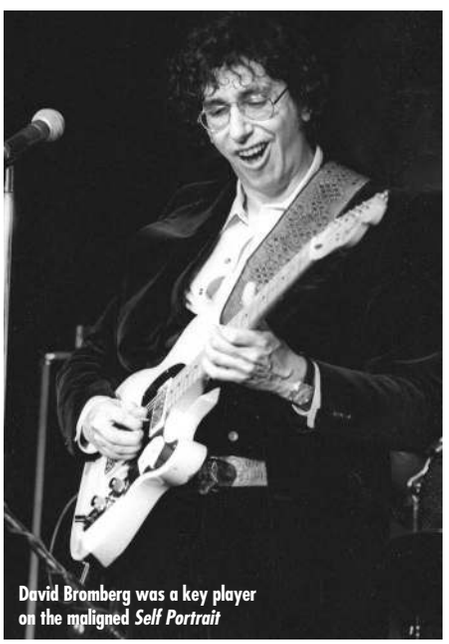
In 1969, the closing words of *Rolling Stone*'s review of Bob Dylan's final album of the decade read: "In many ways, *Nashville Skyline* achieves the artistically impossible: a deep, humane, and interesting statement about being happy. It could well be what Dylan thinks it is: his best album." The opening words of the magazine's review of *Self Portrait*, his first album of the next decade, began with the words: "What is this shit?".

It marked the kind of artistic decline most artists may experience over decades, but in actuality it represented just a 12-month period in his career. However, like many things in the world of Bob Dylan, perceptions change greatly over time.

Throughout the 1960s, Dylan knocked out seminal album after seminal album, with each reaffirming his status as an icon of the era and the voice of a generation. It was a label that grated on him hugely. So much so that when he kicked off the next decade with *Self Portrait*, an album featuring a bunch of covers and a handful of originals that many deemed sub-standard, it was debated for years whether the album was a joke or an intentional misstep to shake off the shackles of pressure.

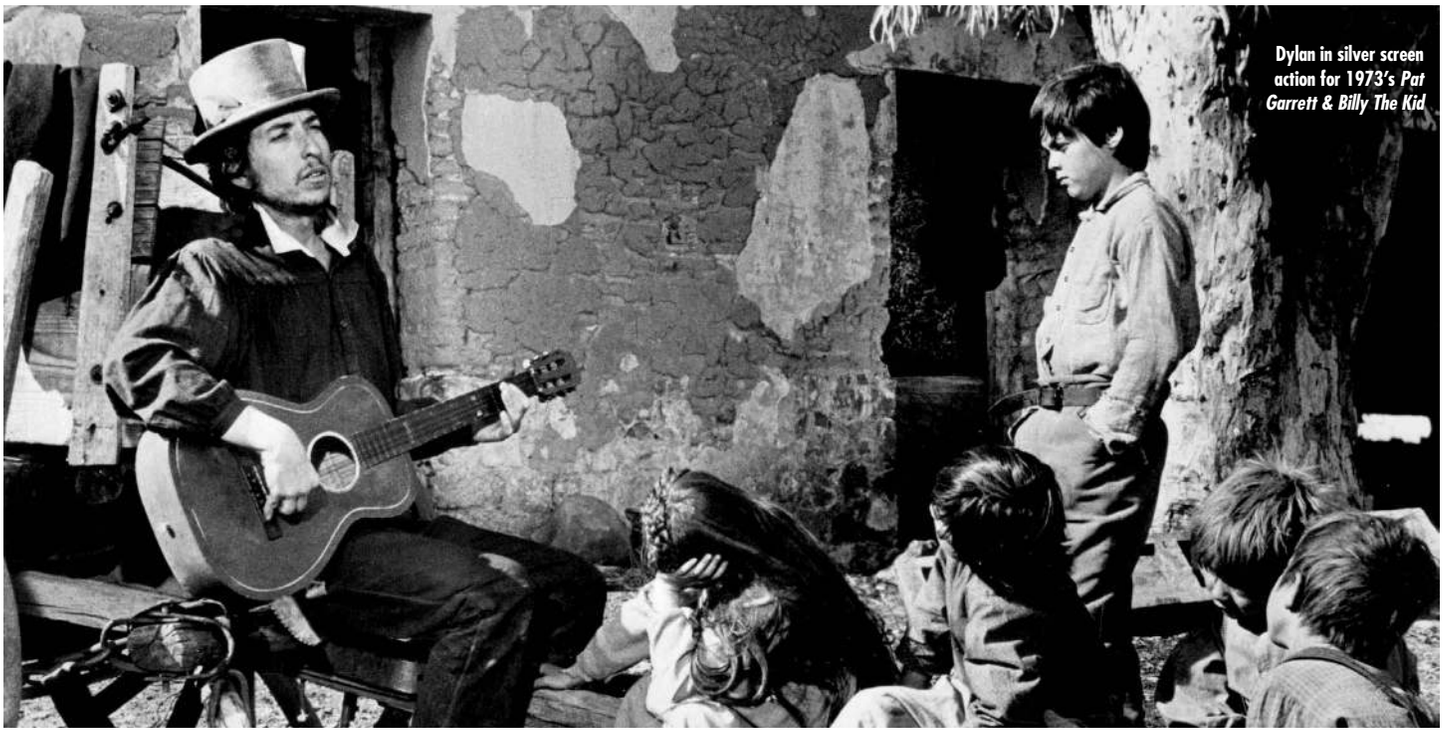
Later on, Dylan himself referred to it as more of a bootleg record – an odds and sods leftovers affair. In 2013, it got expanded and became part of Dylan's long-standing *Bootleg Series*, by which point the response had warmed somewhat, with it taking on a new degree of affection for some fans. It also benefited from one of its tracks, *Wigwam*, being in one of the most beloved and hip films of the 2000s: Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums*.

"People were not as critical and demanding when the recent *Bootleg Series* stuff came out," says David Bromberg, who was a key player on the album – and many of those bootleg sessions feature just him and Dylan. "The first time around, people lambasted *Self Portrait*. They were very critical because of the lack of original songs, and that's what they wanted.



David Bromberg was a key player on the maligned *Self Portrait*

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS/GETTY



Dylan in silver screen action for 1973's *Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid*

So that material now has less preconceptions around it when people approach it, and they seem to enjoy it more." Dylan had very little to express about his intentions for the album, as Bromberg recalls: "I didn't try to analyse if he was on a mission or not, my focus was on doing my job. I just put one foot in front of the other." The session was so lacking in anything resembling verbal direction that Bromberg feels that's why he was brought in; to simply follow where the music went. "He didn't direct me very much at all," he recalls.

If Dylan's attempt on *Self Portrait* was self sabotage, then to some degree it worked. If he'd begun the year with an album that was soon deemed his worst, then where is there left to go but up? At least in theory. The following *New Morning*, released just months later, was an extension of some of the smoother, country-laced rock that he had wrapped up the 1960s with. The opening love song *If Not For You* possessed such an accessible pop-kissed buoyancy that Olivia Newton John would later cover it. The album was received glowingly and came loaded with sentiments such as "we've got Dylan back". However, anyone thinking they had Dylan back in a mode that felt safe, comfortable and reassuring was about to buckle up for a decade-long ride across more musical styles, bands, albums, shifts and surprises than most artists go through in their entire lifetime.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCKIN'

Dylan's foray into film grew throughout the decade, and the 1973 follow-up to *New Morning* was the soundtrack to the Sam Peckinpah film *Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid*. Not only did Dylan star, but he also produced a song for inclusion in the film that would go on to be a worldwide smash and one of his most enduring and beloved hits. It's the kind of song that even people who hate Dylan, or your auntie who doesn't really like music, will hum away gently to. *Knockin' On Heaven's Door* was proof of Dylan's ability to pluck magic from the most unlikely of sources, and this trait continued as the years went on. His sole intention was seemingly making sure his moves could never be anticipated.

More changes were afoot for Dylan in the following year or so. Relations had soured and interest waned from his record label Columbia, so he found himself on Asylum in the US, and he soon announced his first tour since 1966, an activity he had given up since his severe motorcycle accident that same year.

The Bob Dylan and The Band 1974 tour coincided with the release of *Planet Waves* and it also began a new era in Dylan's career that saw him reapproaching older material in increasingly experimental and altered ways, something Dylan is now utterly synonymous with, be it lovingly or to much chagrin.

"I didn't try to analyse if he was on a mission or not, my focus was my job"

DAVID BROMBERG

Album #2

NEW MORNING

19 OCTOBER 1970

CBS 69001

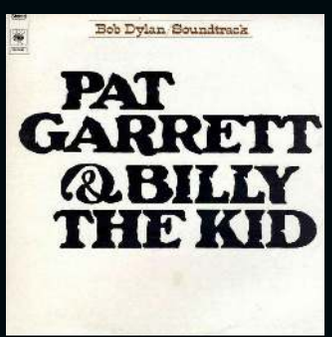
After the savaging dished out to *Self Portrait*, *Rolling Stone*'s review this time declared "Bob Dylan is back with us again". It's wide of the mark to suggest it's an immediate riposte from Dylan, though – as much of *New Morning* pre-dates that record. The joyful shuffling *If Not For You* is sublime, Dylan's familiar nasal vocal back to the fore; *Sign On The Window* is even better. The sessions weren't entirely harmonious. "When I finished that album I never wanted to speak to him again," said Al Kooper.

DISCOGS £7

BETTMANN ARCHIVE/GETTY

Dylan onstage with The Band in 1974

Album #3



PAT GARRETT & BILLY THE KID

13 JULY 1973

CBS 69042

Dylan's first soundtrack LP, for Sam Peckinpah's film of the same name, yielded one of his biggest hits, *Knockin' On Heaven's Door*. At the time critically under-appreciated, it's a beautiful, airy, rough-hewn record that ended a three-year period of silence from Dylan. Two-minute instrumental *Bunkhouse Theme* is a beatific highlight. While an initial session took place in Mexico City, where Bob was living while filming, the bulk of the album was recorded at Burbank Studios in California.

DISCOGS £8

This was captured on the 1974 live album *Before The Flood*, a record bursting with gusto, energy and big raucous performances, with both Dylan and The Band stretching the life out of songs in performances that felt as if they were making up for lost time on stage. If Dylan had begun the era by tentatively testing the water with some leftover cover songs, by this stage he was back in full swing, bolstered by a charging sense of momentum.

For his 1975 follow-up, the majestic *Blood On The Tracks*, Dylan ditched The Band and returned to Columbia Records to release an album that remains one of the pinnacles of his career. Unsurprisingly, it centred around change and forward momentum but was also rooted in pain and leaving things behind. As Dylan's marriage was entering difficulty, he churned out an album of intense, potent and overwhelming honesty that for many remains the template for confessional singer-songwriter albums. Although of course Dylan, being Dylan, has gone on record at times to suggest it's not a personal record.

Sessions for the ensuing 1976 album *Desire* started in July 1975 and concluded in October, just as Dylan embarked on one of his most notorious tours: The Rolling Thunder Revue.

It's a period caught recently in Martin Scorsese's non-documentary documentary *Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story*, that wilfully merges fiction and non-fiction along with tour footage in which Dylan had decided to play smaller venues and with a ragtag collective including everyone from Allen Ginsberg to Joan Baez featuring along

Scarlet Rivera was an important figure during the *Desire* sessions

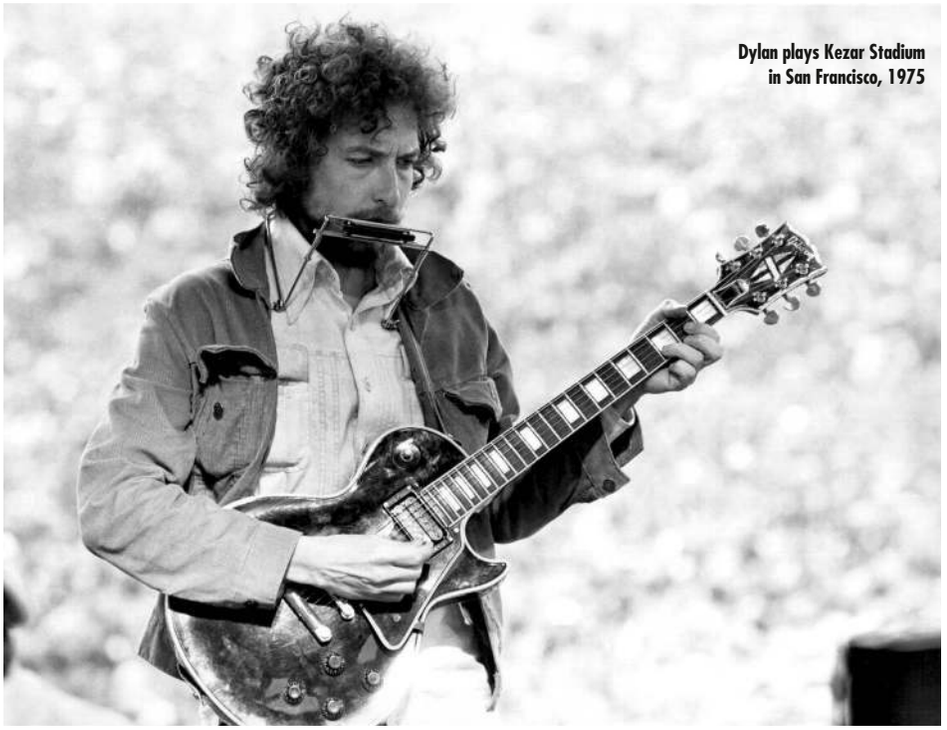
Why I Love...

PAT GARRETT & BILLY THE KID

"Seen as a slight upon its release, the music fits the Sam Peckinpah film of the same name to perfection, a cycle of simple, dusty, looping, down-home borderland tunes, tracking the story of a man who doesn't want to run being pursued by his old friend who doesn't want to catch him. Highlight: the classic *Knockin' On Heaven's Door*."

LEE RANALDO, SONIC YOUTH

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY TOM BRONOWSKI



Dylan plays Kezar Stadium in San Francisco, 1975

Album #4

PLANET WAVES

17 JANUARY 1974

ISLAND ILPS 9261

Newly signed to Asylum Records in the US and Island in the UK, Dylan's 14th studio LP was characterised by the return of The Band. Dylan so agonised over the arrangement for *Forever Young* that it's included twice – the slow version is wonderful. Recorded hastily, it's a strong set, although few predicted the sheer brilliance that was to follow over the next two years as Dylan unleashed first *Blood On The Tracks* then *Desire*. The moral of the story: don't try to second guess Bob Dylan.

DISCOGS £15 (PINK RIM)

the way. "I was just a kid as he was leading this whole wild circus," remembers David Mansfield, who Dylan had brought into his band when he was just 18.

GYPSY MUSIC

It marked a period in which Dylan seemed to be plucking new people to work with almost out of thin air. Violinist Scarlet Rivera was one such person. "One summer day, I was walking down 13th St on the Lower East Side of New York City with my violin case when an ordinary car pulled up alongside me," she recalls. "The man driving was very curious about me as a musician and asked if I could play that thing. I said, 'Yes, I can play'. He went on to talk about how he liked gypsy music that he heard when traveling. I told him I liked gypsy music, too. I was going to a rehearsal across the street, but he said to forget that because he had to hear me play."

Soon enough, Rivera was in a studio with Dylan, following his lead on a bunch of songs. "After playing for about an hour, he moved to the piano and tried a few more songs," she remembers. "He never said a word about my playing the entire time, but I observed a small smile before he shut the lid and said, 'I have to go see a friend of mine play, do you want to come along? Back in the car, we went to see the

Album #5

BLOOD ON THE TRACKS

17 JANUARY 1975

CBS 69097

A strong contender for the best album Dylan has made and almost certainly the best break-up album of all time, *Blood On The Tracks'* remorseful self examination doesn't let up from the opening acoustic guitar chord of *Tangled Up In Blue*. Originally recorded in just four days, the album was pulled from the release schedule by Dylan and re-recorded in Minneapolis in the first days of 1975. It was released a fortnight later, taking its place alongside 60s masterpieces *Blonde On Blonde* and *Highway 61 Revisited*. *Simple Twist Of Fate* is a song of jaw-dropping romantic reflection, while *You're A Big Girl Now* and the vengeful *Idiot Wind* are potent reminders of Dylan's ability to both deliver devotional tributes of heart-splitting fondness and rain down righteous fury, often in the space of the same couplet. *You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go*, too, is "right on target, so direct" an affectionate farewell shot through with painful regret. *If You See Her Say Hello* bursts with the pain of pining for a loved one departed for foreign shores, while closing pair *Shelter From The Storm* and *Buckets Of Rain* are simplistic perfection.

DISCOGS £25 (ORANGE LABEL)

"I was going to a rehearsal across the street, but he said to forget that because he had to hear me play" SCARLET RIVERA

The Rolling Thunder Revue saw Dylan cutting loose live on stage with his hand-picked band

Album #6

DESIRE

5 JANUARY 1976

CBS 86003

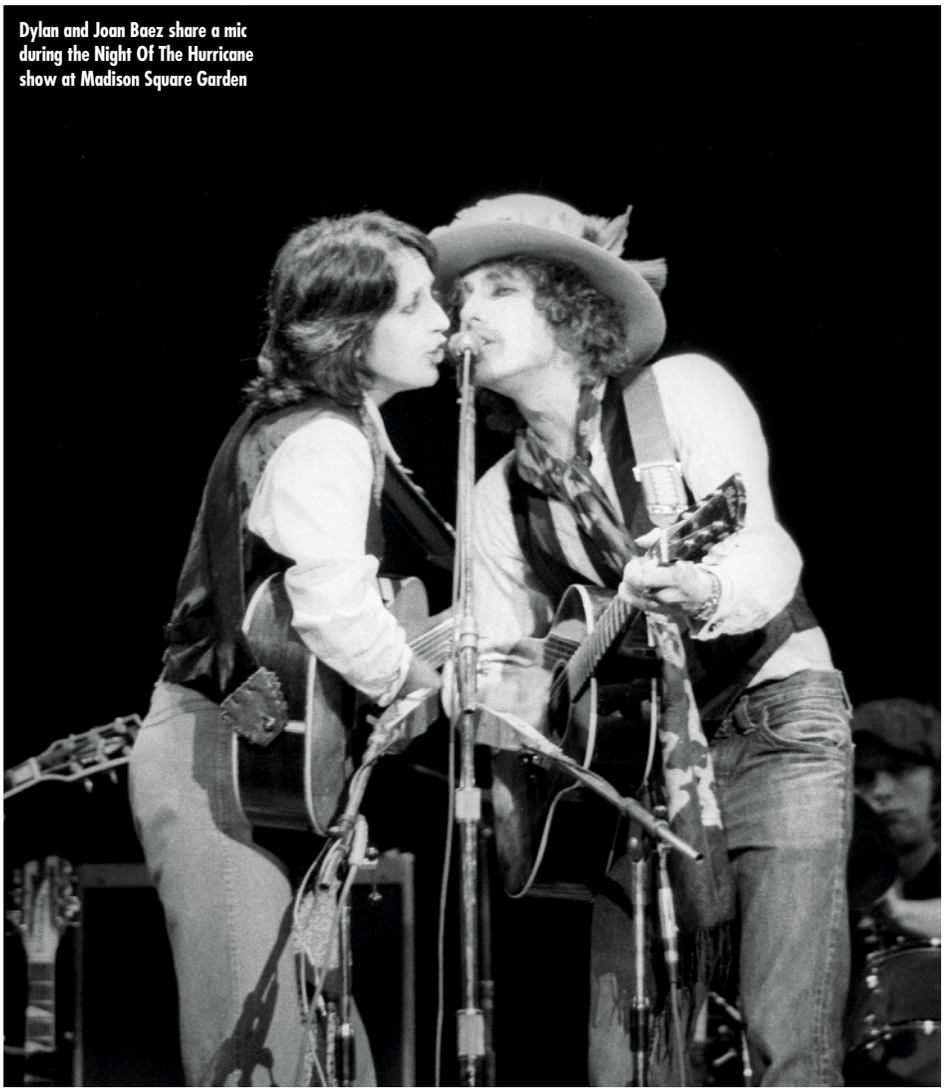
Sandwiched between two Rolling Thunder Revues, *Desire* features many of the musicians from that touring circus. Despite the huge cast and chaotic recording sessions, it's a worthy follow-up to *Blood On The Tracks* that sees Dylan continue his rebirth. The sprawling character stories – *Hurricane,* inspired by the murder case against boxer Rubin Carter, and *Joey,* about gangster Joey Gallo, are majestic – while Rivera's sweeping violin work is an evocative counterpart.

DISCOGS £15

Muddy Waters Band. He got up to thunderous applause and at the end of the first song with Muddy, he went to the mic and announced, 'Now I want to bring up my violinist to play'."

It's an emblematic story of where Dylan was at during this time: wide open, following instinct, intuition and spontaneity. Rob Stoner would be in his band for three years from 1975-1978 and became something of a right-hand man. "It was a surreal time but a real thrill," he says. He recalls what on the surface appeared to be a harmless jam session as Dylan eyeing him up. "I've come to realise that what he was doing was auditioning me for future reference. He was trying to build up a dossier of potential sidemen. When he hung out with me jamming, I later realised he was testing me."

Musical gut instinct is what Dylan was looking for in players around this time. "I'm a jazz player, and in the jazz scene we never verbalise stuff, we just go ahead and play," says Stoner. "Usually, you can let the music do the talking and Dylan was a guy who expected that level of simpatico. Anybody who would ask a lot of questions would not be on his list. He would just do things and expect you to follow." He remembers bandmate Howie Wyeth initially not catching this. "Howie asked a perfectly reasonable question during one of the first sessions about how we were



Dylan and Joan Baez share a mic during the Night Of The Hurricane show at Madison Square Garden

Album #7

STREET-LEGAL
15 JUNE 1978
CBS 86067
Following *Blood On The Tracks* and *Desire* while dealing with the fallout from a divorce and the Rolling Thunder Revue was always going to be a tough ask, and *Street-Legal* is a record that divides opinion. Hampered by stodgy production, it never catches light, but it still possesses some fine songs, such as opener *Changing Of The Guards* (listen out for the *Animal Hospital* theme tune in the solo). Despite the mixed reaction from critics, it remains one of Dylan's biggest-selling albums in the UK.
DISCOGS £15

going to end a song and Bob just gave him the most fucking evil eye and I knew right away the way to play it was to keep your mouth shut. I took him aside and told him he was going to blow the gig and to shut the fuck up."

This led to very few people ever really getting a sense of Dylan as a person, the man behind the myth and persona. Stoner would often act as intermediary, relaying messages and the like. However, he felt this slightly distanced approach was conducive to getting the best out of the band when playing together. "Follow him and you can't go wrong," Stoner says. "You shouldn't have to verbalise anything. He was always looking for reinvention. You have to be ready for anything, any kind of curveball. That's part of the test. You never really stop auditioning with him. I like it when somebody does that, though, because it keeps the band on their toes. If you just do the same thing over and over again, you just get a thousand-yard stare after a while."

"Follow him and you can't go wrong. He was always looking for reinvention. You have to be ready for anything" ROB STONER

With nobody ever knowing what was coming next, both musically and personally, it captured a thrilling and potent time. "It would take a couple of chapters to fully express my inner and outer experiences during the Rolling Thunder Revue tour," says Rivera. "To this day, I meet people who saw the show and say it was one of the most unforgettable shows they have ever seen." It's all come rushing back to the surface via the Scorsese film, too. "The concert footage was brilliant and riveting, and I was very moved to see from the audience perspective the electric fiery chemistry that was evident onstage between Bob and myself."

However, the casualness towards truth in the film has brought up a few issues for band members. "I was more than a little surprised when it was revealed that I was dating the leader of the band Kiss," says Rivera. "There were several other spicy things said about me that I suppose added some intrigue or illusion that also were not true. I did carry a dagger, but no, I didn't carry live snakes on tour."

Why I Love...

STREET-LEGAL

"*Street-Legal* is the 70s Dylan for me. Bob spewing at the top of his singing and writing powers. Almost as good as Mark E Smith. The big production could have sounded overdone, but it is perfect. It doesn't have other 70s hits, like *Hurricane* or *Tangled Up In Blue,* but it's a more solid album."
JEFFREY LEWIS

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS/GETTY NIRZARDP

"We got a lot of nasty press during the Street-Legal tour that the arrangements were too polished" DAVID MANSFIELD

For Stoner, Dylan's approach to having his band work around him and ready to shift direction at any point was also mirrored in the studio for *Desire*. "It was a total extension of our jam sessions," he says. "His studio approach was way more of a snapshot than a workmanlike and detailed approach. Bob's studio approach goes back to pre-multitrack era, before people did loads of overdubbing and layering and meticulous craft. A lot of people who end up recording Bob's albums just think they are doing demos because the amount of time he spends recording in the studio is nothing but an immortalisation of how he felt about the tune on the day he was recording. If he gets a recording that doesn't have any major technical flaws, then that's the take and that's what goes on the record because he's interested in spontaneity and he's a very mercurial individual. That's part of the charm of his recordings, they are so off-the-cuff."

Initially, the album-making process was a studio stuffed full of people, including Eric Clapton. It wasn't until a much more stripped-down band was brought in that things were "clicking" according to Stoner. "They were getting nowhere with all these musicians there. It was too hectic and chaotic." Rivera remembers the shift, too: "I returned and was shocked that the bustling room was quiet. I knew something extraordinary had happened, but it would take quite some time to process the fact that I replaced Eric Clapton as the lead soloist. Bob allowed me complete freedom to follow my intuition without restraints. *One More Cup Of Coffee* was recorded in one take. He listened carefully but didn't try to control what I might come up with. Looking back, if I failed and he wasn't impressed with my playing, he already had Eric Clapton's lines recorded and I could have been replaced. But my contribution prevailed and was featured on every song on the album."

A SLICKER RECORD

More touring and another live album, *Hard Rain*, was released. By 1977, Dylan was in the studio again to make what would be 1978's *Street-Legal*, and had once again plucked out a new band to work with. Mansfield was retained, however, and remembers the difference between the Rolling Thunder Revue era and this period as being "black and white". It marked a tough time for Dylan, slap bang in the middle of a divorce, but Mansfield remembers him being in good form.

"During the *Street-Legal* tour I felt I got a better sense of him. He was chatty and affable and would hang with the band in the bar after the show. He seemed to be feeling great despite personal problems. I'm projecting here, but maybe with the divorce going as far as it did… performing just lifted his spirits."

The folky swing of *Desire* was replaced by a more polished, slicker record. Something people reacted to negatively at the time. "We got a lot of nasty press during that tour that the arrangements were too polished," recalls Mansfield. "Although he never fell into a black mood over things like press. I'd seen him get into those kind of moods on the second Rolling Thunder tour, so I know what that looks like."

There's a playfulness apparent with Dylan here once again. Just when the hardcore fans and press had him where they wanted him, *Desire* was a success and the Rolling Thunder tour was deemed an electrifying spectacle to begin with, he switched things up and sent people falling.

I Shall Be Released...

5 BOOTLEG SERIES HIGHLIGHTS THAT CHART BOB'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE 70S

THE BOOTLEG SERIES VOL. 5: BOB DYLAN LIVE 1975, THE ROLLING THUNDER REVUE

A live album taken from the first stretch of Dylan's ragtag collective 1975 tour (the second half of said tour was originally released on the live album *Hard Rain*). It captures Dylan relatively fresh from a near decade-long live absence.

DISCOGS £60

THE BOOTLEG SERIES VOL. 10: ANOTHER SELF PORTRAIT (1969–1971)

Loathed, lambasted and derided at the time of release, 1970's *Self Portrait* grew on many over the years and this expanded edition goes deeper into some of the sessions and versions from the album that many saw as Dylan's disastrous start to the 1970s.

DISCOGS £69

THE BOOTLEG SERIES VOL. 11: THE BASEMENT TAPES COMPLETE

Originally recorded in 1967, *The Basement Tapes* (a collaboration with The Band) wasn't released until 1975. This collection is the ultimate putting together of music from these sessions. Bootlegged and the subject of myths for years, it collates much of the work from one of Dylan's most beloved periods.

DISCOGS £48

THE BOOTLEG SERIES VOL. 13: TROUBLE NO MORE 1979–1981

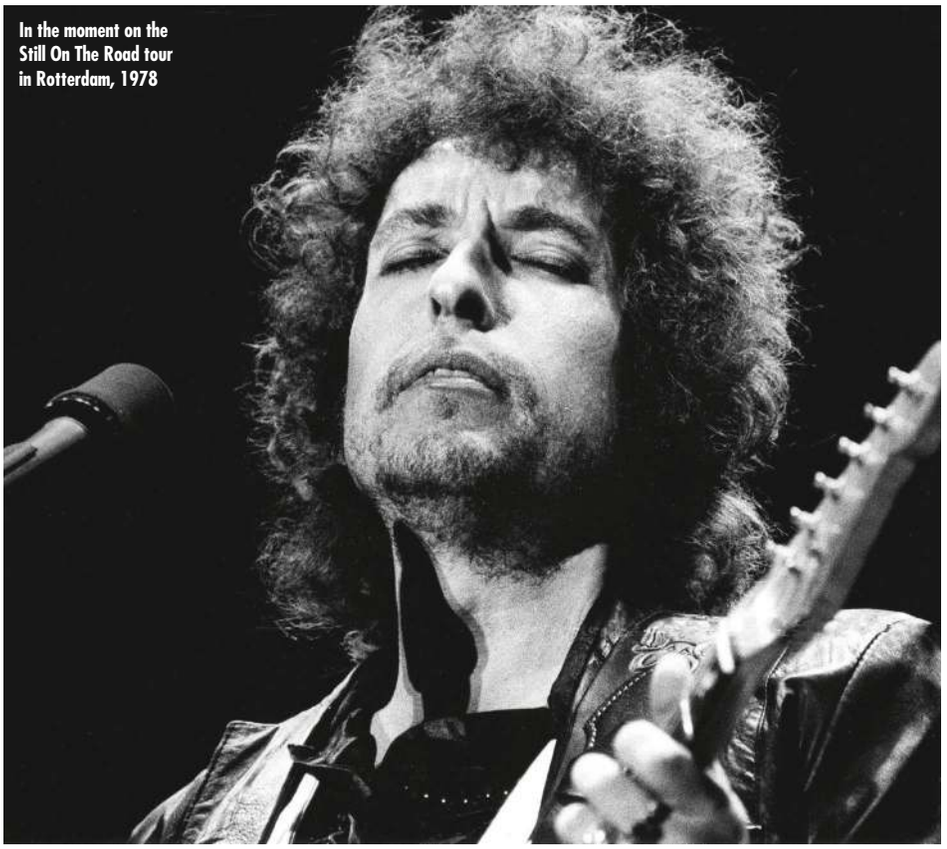
A collection of music released from slap bang in the middle of Dylan's born-again Christian phase. Much like *Self Portrait*, albums from this period (*Slow Train Coming*, *Saved* and *Shot Of Love*) were seen as low points at the time, but over time have gained a stronger cult following.

DISCOGS £33

THE BOOTLEG SERIES VOL. 14: MORE BLOOD, MORE TRACKS

More music collected from the sessions of one of Dylan's greatest albums. A fascinating insight into his songwriting process and how he played so seamlessly with melody, with songs overlapping in similarity in demo form only to go on to be distinct and unforgettable on the finished album.

DISCOGS £25



In the moment on the Still On The Road tour in Rotterdam, 1978

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS/GETTY BERTRAND

However, the financial losses of the Rolling Thunder tour, as well as from his derided film *Renaldo And Clara* (of which Scorsese's film is essentially a re-edit) saw Dylan set off on a huge tour of the Far East, playing huge venues as a slick professional touring operation – the antithesis of the chaotic Rolling Thunder days. The result was another live album, *Live At Budokan*, that captured this new slickness and sleekness, combined with radically altered versions of songs that would often lead towards pop-heavy interpretations. It contains some of Dylan's most interesting tweaks of his own work, but people hated it and it saw some of the most savage reviews not only of the decade but of his entire career.

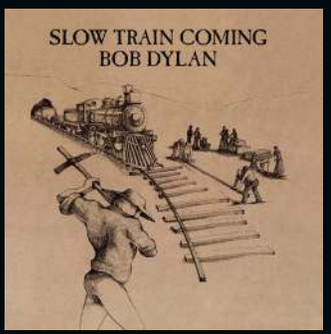
Stoner says he saw a change in him on that tour that might explain Dylan's most radical shift of the entire decade. "He seemed to be a soul adrift in a world of confusion," he recalls. Soon, Dylan would convert to Christianity and it would feature prominently on his next albums. "I think that's one of the reasons he cleared house," says Stoner of Dylan's decision to once again work with a series of fresh musicians. "He was going through a lot of personal stuff in his life. I could see he was at his wits' end with figuring out what life was all about. He was looking for some kind of deeper meaning. I was not surprised at all that he turned to religion for self-fulfilment."

Mansfield, however, who was also let go, didn't see it coming. "Being let go was a total surprise when he went through his whole religious conversion. He just let everyone go and cancelled all touring commitments. He gave his manager a heart attack. When he was then ready to work again, he just didn't want to work with anybody from the old days."

What followed was *Slow Train Coming*, an album that opens with the religious anthem *Gotta Serve Somebody* that repulsed atheist John Lennon to such a degree that it warranted a response track that parodied Dylan: *Gotta Serve Yourself*. While Mansfield understands Dylan's religious change during this era – he too went through it – he reflects back on this era and his burning through so many bands and musicians as being something rooted deeper in Dylan's psyche. "When Bob has a band that he's not satisfied with, I don't think he knows how to fix things," he says. "He might say, 'You guys are playing like shit' or have a temper tantrum, but he won't know how to be specific and go about changing things. I saw him play with his band around *Slow Train Coming* era and he had some of the best players in the world, and I think he had them kind of intimidated into barely playing. They were all playing the safest most boring stuff, and then not long after that there was another new band."

When asked for his insight into the way Dylan operated and moved in the 1970s, and how he would sum up a decade of such profound change, unpredictability and highs and lows, Stoner's immediate response is a simple but perfectly apt one. "May I cite the title of his movie, *Don't Look Back*," he offers. "This espouses his life philosophy quite neatly." ●

Album #8



SLOW TRAIN COMING

20 AUGUST 1979

CBS 86095

More carefully constructed than Dylan's other 70s albums, *Slow Train Coming* saw Jerry Wexler take the producer's chair. Dylan evokes the forces of good and evil throughout an album deeply tied up with his embracing of Christianity. The album was recorded at Muscle Shoals, with Dire Straits guitarist Mark Knopfler and drummer Pick Withers brought into the fold. While both Wexler and Knopfler had doubts about the Biblical content, the results are among Dylan's strongest of the decade.

DISCOGS £4

Why I Love...

LIVE AT BUDOKAN

"I can think of nothing more punk rock than Dylan taking all his songs, adored by myopic music snobs, and turning them into shiny pop songs. He totally smashes it, too. This album has the best recorded version of *I Want You* on it and when the saxophone comes in on *Simple Twist Of Fate* it gets me every time. He inhabits the role of the lounge singer brilliantly as well, with all his perfectly placed asides. I love this album so much that I burst with joy every time I put it on."

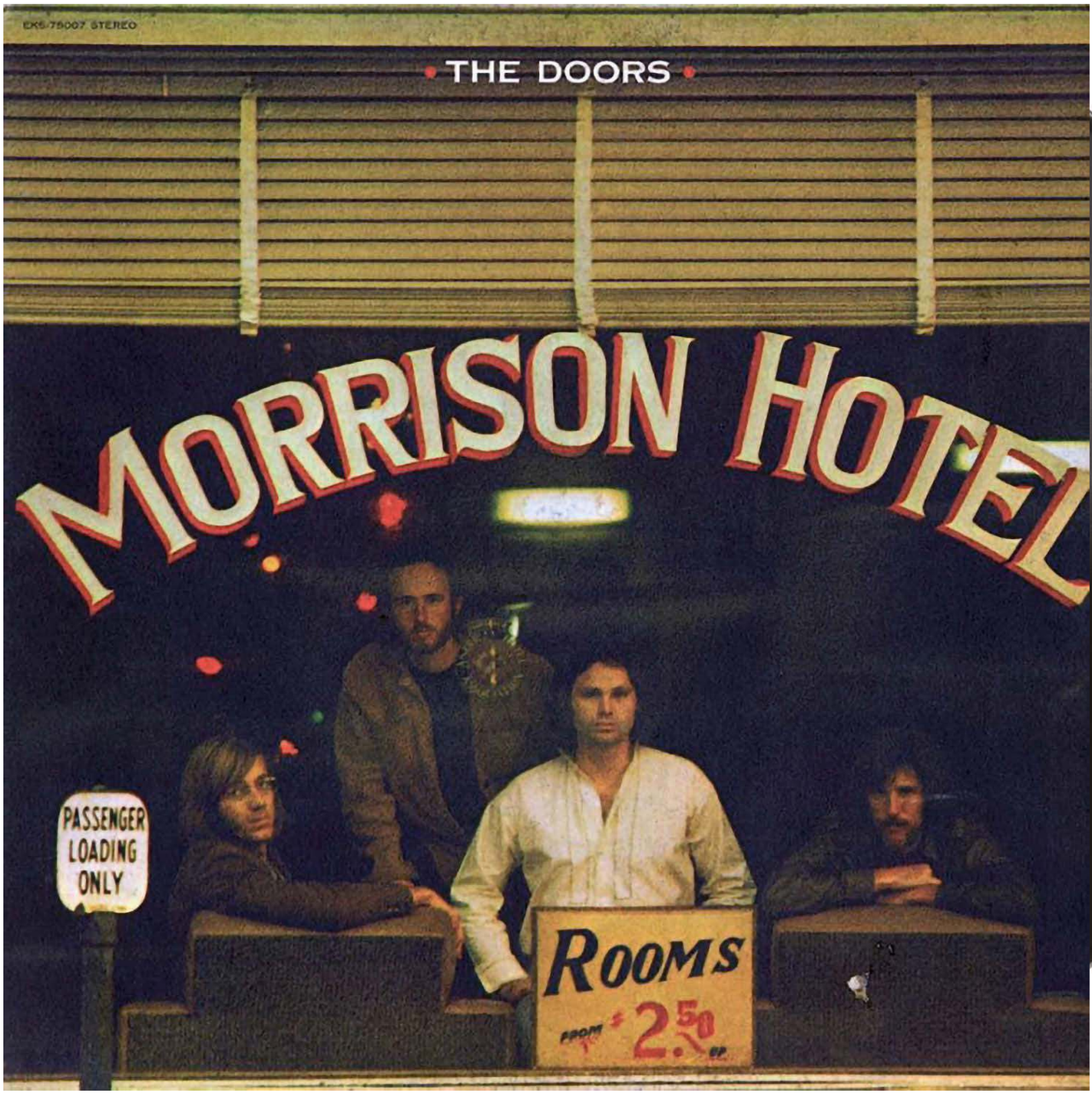
EDDIE ARGOS (ART BRUT)

Classic Album

The Doors

MORRISON HOTEL

On their fifth album, The Doors abandoned experimental dalliances for the raw, sonic crunch of electric blues that had defined them in the first place. Fifty years on from its release, Neil Crossley assesses the merits of the album that returned them to the attention of the hip counterculture


EKS-75007 STEREO
THE DOORS
MORRISON HOTEL
PASSENGER
LOADING
ONLY
ROOMS
FROM $ 2.50 UP

Breaking on through: (l to r) John Densmore, Robby Krieger, Ray Manzarek and Jim Morrison

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Few albums have started life quite so inauspiciously as *Morrison Hotel*, the fifth long player by seminal LA four-piece, The Doors. As the band prepared to enter the studio in November 1969, they were still smarting from the critical pounding that had greeted their previous album *The Soft Parade*, an experimental work that encompassed orchestral arrangements, took nine months to record and racked up a whopping $86,000 (equal to $587,563 today) in costs. The album was derided by critics and the band's core underground music scene fans, who viewed it as an opportunistic stab at the pop market.

But by far the greatest problem confronting The Doors in late 1969 was the increasingly volatile behaviour of charismatic lead singer Jim Morrison, which had created a chasm in the band's ranks.

Morrison, the Florida-born son of a US Navy rear admiral, had descended into alcoholism. Gone were the mercurial live shows, replaced instead by incoherent onstage ramblings as he sleepwalked his way through performances. His striking good looks were fading, replaced instead by a bloated appearance, his ballooned face obscured by a huge beard. Morrison and his band's problems were compounded on 1 March 1969 when he was arrested onstage in Miami for allegedly exposing himself to the audience.

Then in November, the day before the band entered Elektra Studios to start work on their new album, Morrison was arrested by the FBI for "drunk and disorderly conduct aboard a plane" as he disembarked from a flight in Phoenix. If found guilty on both charges, he would have faced a 13-year jail sentence. By the time The Doors assembled for the first day of recording, the rest of the band were barely talking to him.

Despite such obstacles, *Morrison Hotel* would signal a real return to form. Haunted by the response to *The Soft Parade,* The Doors followed their instincts and pursued a muscular, back-to-basics sound. Like other bands at the time, they returned to their roots, and for The Doors, that was electric blues. It was a decision that would reignite their career and produce an album that, 50 years on, is still powerfully impressive.

THE WAY FORWARD

For those within The Doors' immediate orbit, a new album seemed like the most pragmatic way to proceed as the 60s drew to a close. Elektra Records president Jac Holzman, the man who signed the band back in spring 1966, certainly thought so. "It could have been over after Miami," he told Mick Wall of *Classic Rock* in 2014. "They didn't know what to do. I said: 'Time to make another record. Go into the studio. Work out your demons in the studio'."

The problem for the band was that Morrison arrived at the studio with no ideas. He was more interested in hanging out at the Whisky A Go Go, where he would more often than not be steaming drunk, as Pamela des Barres, one of the people who had known Morrison since his pre-fame days, recalled. Des Barres remembers leaving the club one night in late 1969 and finding Morrison curled up in the gutter. "People were stepping over him. That's what had happened to his mystique."

For The Doors' keyboard player and co-founder Ray Manzarek, Morrison's troubles were particularly upsetting. Chicago-raised Manzarek had met Morrison at University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), where the two studied

film. By the time they graduated in 1965, LA's Venice Beach was emerging as the epicentre of a vibrant new counterculture. This was where Manzarek was living in 1965; he was sitting on the beach one day, pondering his future, when a familiar face came into view.

"Morrison comes walking down the beach and I said, 'what have you been up to?'. He said, 'I'm writing songs'. So I said, 'let me hear some of your songs'. And he was very shy about it and said, 'No I don't have much of a voice'. I said, 'Forget it man, Bob Dylan doesn't have a voice and he's like the biggest thing going'. And he says, 'OK, OK, OK'. And he closes his eyes and he starts to bob to himself and then he sings: 'Let's swim to the moon, let's climb through the tide…'."

This song would eventually appear as *Moonlight Drive* on The Doors' second album *Strange Days*. Manzarek was transfixed. "Jim said, 'Do you like it? Do you like it?'. I said, 'I love it man'. And at that point I said to him, 'OK man, we're getting a rock and roll band together. We're going all the way with this one'."

Manzarek brought in his two brothers Rick and Jim, on guitar and harmonica respectively, and on drums he enlisted John Densmore, who had studied ethnic music under jazz cellist Fred Katz. Densmore was impressed by Morrison. "I thought, 'woah, this guy's magic'," he recalled.

The nascent band went under the name Rick and the Ravens, and recorded the *End Of The Night* demos, which failed to spark any interest from the numerous labels they took them to. Dispirited, Manzarek's two brothers left the band, to be replaced by Robby Krieger, whose fingerstyle flamenco guitar tuition and keen interest in the blues gave him a unique playing style.

The new line-up began rehearsing at Manzarek's house in Venice Beach. "We'd rehearse during the day in the sun room," he recalled in the documentary *Classic Albums: The Doors*. "You'd open the door and you'd step out onto sand."

For new recruit Krieger, the rich potential of the band was evident from the first rehearsal. "That first day we got together, we thought we were as good as the Stones," he said. "As good as anybody."

RELENTLESS REHEARSAL

Over the next year, the band rehearsed relentlessly in their idyllic beachside location. They changed their name to The Doors, taking inspiration from the book *Doors Of Perception* by Aldous Huxley. "We were honing songs," recalled John Densmore, "we wanted to write the best songs on the planet."

The band signed a deal with Columbia Records, but left the label within months after none of the in-house A&R producers expressed an interest in working with them. In early 1966, they landed a residency at a club called The London Fog, on Sunset Strip.

The London Fog was sleazy, but had the benefit of being close to the Whisky A Go Go, where The Doors were then hired to play in 1966, supporting bands such as The Byrds

"The first day we got together, we thought we were as good as the Stones. As good as anybody"
ROBBY KRIEGER

The songs

CORE PERSONNEL

Jim Morrison Lead vocals, maracas, tambourine
Ray Manzarek Keyboards
Robby Krieger Guitar
John Densmore Drums

ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL

Lonnie Mack Bass guitar (Tracks 1 and 11)
Ray Neapolitan Bass guitar (Tracks 2 to 9)

MAIN PRODUCTION CREDITS

Paul A Rothchild

RECORDED

November 1969 to January 1970
Elektra Sound Recorders, Los Angeles, California

RELEASED

9 February 1970
Elektra

1 Roadhouse Blues

Nothing embodies the raw electric blues The Doors were striving for on *Morrison Hotel* better than this majestic opening track, a driving blues shuffle on which Robby Krieger's thick, distorted guitar riff locks in seamlessly with session veteran Lonnie Mack's bass guitar. In the course of the session, Ray Manzarek swapped his trademark Wurlitzer electric piano for a 'tack' piano, the same one used on *Good Vibrations* by The Beach Boys, and his playing adds a real fluidity to the sound. Central to the track is the harmonica playing of The Lovin' Spoonful's John Sebastian – credited as 'G. Puglese' in the liner notes for contractual reasons – which adds real soul and menace to the track.

2 Waiting For The Sun

Two years after recording this title track of their third album, and being disappointed with the results, the band resurrected the song on *Morrison Hotel*. The lyrical focus is the quest for the American Dream, a journey that is ultimately unrealised. Morrison's relaxed, almost crooned lyrics and Krieger's tasteful slide are interspersed with Densmore's powerful drum flams and heavy slabs of riffing after every couplet on the verse. Despite the harder, heavier treatment, the track never quite shakes the spirit of '67, and a psychedelic prog-tinged tone pervades.

3 You Make Me Real

Honkytonk blues piano intros this spirited slice of 4/4 rock, a 12-bar of sorts that is elevated by some powerhouse tom work from drummer John Densmore and driving, distorted bass. There's an urgency and edge to this track. As ever, Morrison's strong, smooth baritone vocals elevate the whole, as he veers between a rich, menacing drawl and fevered howls and screeches. Krieger's guitar work is jagged and there's a real sparseness within the sound, despite the freneticism. At moments, Morrison's soulful ad libs, and the instrumental stops and accents, evoke the tight groove of the Stax house band.

The songs
CONTINUED

4 Peace Frog
The violent 1968 Democratic Convention and a Morrison poem entitled *Abortion Stories* are the main lyrical influences of this track, regarded by many, such as famed rock writer Lester Bangs, as the best track on the album. Thick staccato chops from Robby Krieger, on a G5 chord, intro the track, which lurches into an infectious funk groove. Once again, there is a strong Stax-style sound in evidence. A furious organ solo from Ray Manzarek precedes the mid-section breakdown at 1:42, which features Morrison's renowned spoken verse: "Indians scattered on dawn's highway, bleeding/ Ghosts crowd the young child's fragile eggshell mind."

5 Blue Sunday
Morrison's voice drops to a gentle croon on this haunting, heartfelt track, possibly written for his long-suffering partner Pamela Courson. Skittering brushes on snare, an organ drone, a simple, lilting bassline, it's a beautifully understated arrangement. Morrison's vocals are strong and strident in parts, with the guitar underpinning the vocal refrain. There is a truth and purity in the lyrics and their delivery. "I found my own true love was on a blue Sunday/ She looked at me and told me/ I was the only one in the world/ Now I have found my girl". Written in 1965, the track was revisited by the band, who felt its simplicity would fit the back-to-basics ethos of the album.

6 Ship Of Fools
Legions of bands across the decades, from Grateful Dead to Doves, have recorded songs entitled *Ship Of Fools*, although it seems likely that The Doors were the first. The song is allegedly about an acid trip, although the Moon Landing of 1969 exerts an influence and serves as a focus for an environmental call to arms. 'The human race was dying out/ No one left to scream and shout/ People walking on the moon/ Smog will get you pretty soon'. John Densmore's jazz schooling comes to the fore with some inspired playing. It's a curiously compelling track, verging on early prog and jazz fusion at times, but as always with The Doors, it is unlike anyone else.

7 Land Ho!
John Densmore lays down a skiffle beat for this track, one of the five compositions credited to Morrison/Krieger. Choppy and rhythmic overdriven guitar from Krieger is the defining hook here, while Manzarek's trademark organ playing shines throughout. It's a track that really encapsulates the uniqueness of The Doors' sound, with Manzarek, Krieger and Densmore all striving for the unexpected. A quest for freedom is the broad theme of the lyrics, which in anyone's hands but Morrison's would sound like a pastiche. "Grandma loved a sailor who sailed the frozen sea," he begins in a warm baritone. "Grandpa was that whaler and he took me on his knee/ He said 'Son I'm going crazy from living on the land/ Got to find my shipmates and walk on foreign sand'."

and Them. In spring 1966, Arthur Lee of the band Love recommended them to Elektra's Jac Holzman. He was not taken with The Doors, but held Arthur Lee in sufficiently high esteem to keep returning to watch them. "I wasn't particularly impressed," said Holzman. "I didn't hear any of the iconic songs… but I kept going back and I went back four evenings. On the fourth evening I went back, everything just came together and you just knew."

WINNING COMBINATION
Holzman signed the band to Elektra and teamed them up with producer Paul A Rothchild and engineer Bruce Botnick. The prestige of the label and the cache of Rothchild and Botnick proved an irresistible combination for the band.

"When I heard that we might be on Elektra Records, that was like heaven for me," said Robby Krieger in the documentary *Classic Albums: The Doors*. Then when I heard that we were going to get Paul Rothchild to produce us, that was like it was meant to be because he had produced all these albums that I listened to."

The relationship with Elektra and Rothchild would be a fruitful one. On 24 August 1966, the band entered Sunset Sound Recording Studios and over the following seven days recorded their debut album *The Doors*. The album was released in the first week of January 1967 and from the opening call to arms *Break On Through*, it was one of the most groundbreaking and exhilarating recordings of the psychedelic era. Their sound was unique, blending blues, classical, pop and Eastern music. The band never added a bass player and their live sound in particular was the more distinctive for it. Ray Manzarek's electric organ work and Jim Morrison's deep vocal timbre dominated across ominous yet beguiling melodies.

For The Doors, the intensive honing of their songs and their sound over a one-year period had paid off. "By the time we got in the studio, we had written two albums worth of stuff, so that was a good 30 songs," said John Densmore. "We were pretty confident about all of them."

INTENSE TOURING
Their second album *Strange Days* (1967) drew from the same pool of songs created in Manzarek's Venice Beach apartment. By now, they had embarked on a hectic touring schedule, with Morrison's charismatic onstage persona becoming the focus of the their live act and his lyrics chiming with the burgeoning counterculture. "I am interested in

Cover Concept
In December 1969, while driving around downtown LA, Manzarek and his wife Dorothy came across the Morrison Hotel, a building on South Hope Street offering rooms from $2.50 for transients. This hotel would provide the cover concept. On mid-afternoon 17 December 1969, photographer Henry Diltz shot the cover photo for the album in the hotel's lobby, hurriedly ushering the band into the building, while the desk clerk who had forbidden them from taking photos left his desk for a short break. That same day, Diltz, cover artist Gary Burden and the band went into a bar called the Hard Rock Cafe, at nearby 300 East 5th Street, where Diltz took shots that would feature on the back of the album cover. The gritty reality of the day's photoshoot would reflect the raw, unbridled sound of the band.

> "I'd grown tired of dragging The Doors from one album to another, especially Jim who had virtually dried up"
> **PAUL ROTHCHILD, PRODUCER**

anything about revolt, disorder, chaos," he said, "especially activity that seems to have no other meaning."

Third album *Waiting For The Sun* (1968) reached No. 1 in the US album charts, yielded the hit *Hello, I Love You* and was their breakthrough album in the UK. But it was arguably the weakest of their six studio albums. By the time they were immersed in the protracted sessions for *The Soft Parade* (1969) Rothchild's patience was finally wearing thin. "I'd grown tired of dragging The Doors from one album to another, especially Jim [who] had virtually dried up. Jim would either not want to work or would go into the studio drunk. Most of my energies were spent trying to co-ordinate Jim with the group."

IN THE STUDIO

In the band's earlier years, Morrison had been a driving creative force, arriving at recording sessions with the bulk of the lyrics and melodies already written. When they started working on *Morrison Hotel*, Manzarek was forced into ransacking the singer's journals and notebooks for ideas.

Rothchild encouraged them to be instinctive, rather than spend hours and days striving for the perfect take. The whole feel was of a band returning to its roots and the result a much rawer, spartan sound. Recording was fitful, primarily due to Morrison's relentless drinking.

"The situation was dire," recalled Ray Manzarek. But the more basic sound meant that the creative demands on Morrison were kept to a minimum. Paul Rothchild, too, was delving into Morrison's notebooks in a desperate bid to find lyrics to inspire new songs. On one occasion, he discovered a poem entitled *Abortion Stories,* which became the stand-out track *Peace Frog.*

Rothchild would continue work on the mixes throughout December 1969, but already he and the band sensed that this album was a real return to form. *Morrison Hotel,* or *Morrison Hotel/Hard Rock Cafe* as the original LP was labelled, was released on 9 February 1970 and was viewed by critics and fans alike as a comeback after the critical failure of *The Soft Parade*. The album reached No.4 on the *Billboard* album charts and became the band's highest-charting album in the UK, where it reached the heady heights of No.12. *Morrison Hotel* failed to yield any hit singles, but its raw, crunching electric blues sound was more than enough to return them to favour amongst the hip underground. More importantly, it would set the tone for their final, stunning, studio album, *L.A. Woman* (1971).

In a review of the time, *Circus* magazine praised *Morrison Hotel* as "possibly the best album yet from The Doors", adding that it was "good, hard, evil rock – and one of the best albums released this decade".

Morrison Hotel is not without its faults. But as a body of work, the album is one of their strongest. As the magazine *Classic Rock* put it in an overview of The Doors' back catalogue in 2016: "*Morrison Hotel* is one of the band's most cohesive records, a tightly assembled and tightly played group of songs about life, and death, at the dawn of the 70s." ●

The songs
CONTINUED

8 The Spy

Morrison's intense, troubled relationship with partner Pamela Courson is the lyrical focus of this track, which features a lilting groove and dreamy, meandering blues piano. According to the 1980 Doors biography *No One Gets Out Of Here Alive* by Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman, Morrison and Courson had a violent argument during the *Morrison Hotel* sessions, after she drank his alcohol to prevent him from drinking it. In the book, engineer Bruce Botnik recalled the incident: "So here were the two of them, completely out of their minds. He started shaking her violently… She was crying out of control, telling him he shouldn't drink anymore and that's why she drank it. And I'm cleaning up and I said, 'Hey man, it's pretty late'. He looked up, stopped shaking her, said, 'Yeah, right', hugged her and they walked out arm in arm."

9 Queen Of The Highway

Manzarek's Wurlitzer piano dominates the intro of this track, one of the last great numbers that Morrison would write with Robby Krieger. His relationship with Pamela Courson once again provides the inspiration, which evokes sun-soaked desert highways. "She was a princess, Queen of the Highway/ Sign on the road said: 'Take us to Madre'/ No one could save her/ Save the blind tiger/ He was a monster". Session bassist Ray Neapolitan provides a strong, fluid bassline, which helps power the track along. At 1:25, the track stops and shifts to a jauntier time signature for the middle section. Reports of Morrison's unpredictability at this time abound, but a vocal take such as this, with its warm, deep timbre and effortless delivery, suggest an artist at the top of their game.

10 Indian Summer

Ethereal guitar and spartan toms are the instrumental foundation of this track, which was dismissed by one critic as "a weak throwback to The Doors' first recordings in 1966", doing "little more than add some mood to the album". It's an unfair analysis. There are indeed strong echoes of *The End*, with Krieger's meandering droning lines over one chord evoking Eastern mysticism, but there is a purity to this song. Morrison's delivery is hushed, highlighting the textural nuances within his voice.

11 Maggie M'Gill

The album ends, as it begins, with the swagger of blues-tinged rock, and it's a track whose intro owes something to John Lee Hooker's *Boom Boom.* Jim Morrison created the character of Maggie M'Gill, a woman from the Old West who resorts to prostitution. "Miss Maggie M'Gill, she lived on a hill/ Her daddy got drunk and left her no will/ So she went down, down to Tangy Town/ People down there really like to get it on." There's almost a tragi-comic air to Morrison's lyrics, not that dissimilar to something Nick Cave might have summoned up decades later. Woven between Morrison's raw delivery is some stunning slide guitar from Robby Krieger.

THE ESSENTIAL

British Folk Rock

The genre's greatest vinyl releases tell the story of incredible stringed bands, crystalline vocals and remarkable solo artists. **Gary Tipp** cups an ear

The merging of folk and rock in the UK can tentatively be traced back to a number of sources and, as ever, the historical actuality is a fuzzy, blurred-around-the-edges affair. It's not an exact science, but there's no denying that The Byrds' Beatles-fied version of Dylan's *Mr Tambourine Man* in 1965 was a pivotal release. Not only did it kick-start the folk-rock movement in the US, but it gave a budding generation of British folk musicians the encouragement to plug in their guitars.

Before the shift, the folk-rock pioneers this side of the pond were for the most part involved in the folk revival of the late 50s and early 60s. Pioneering folk-rock bands such as Fairport Convention and Pentangle blazed a trail by adding new layers of musical and lyrical complexity, while solo artists such as John Martyn and Roy Harper introduced the singer-songwriter's introspection. The movement peaked in the mid-70s and it's this glorious heyday that we are concerned with here. British folk rock was given a considerable kicking when punk rock put its steel-capped boot in, and was conspicuous by its absence in the 80s, only to revive again later.

This round-up of essential British folk-rock vinyl releases sweeps up several overlapping sub-genres, with the best of psychedelic, acid and progressive folk also included. There are also some offerings from the occasional rock dinosaurs thrown in for good measure. To keep the range of artists as broad as possible, we've decided against multiple entries for bands or solo artists.

The price estimates we've used in the feature are based on the UK first press of the album in question. As a genre, folk rock is rich with valuable vinyl rarities, so dig in.

40 C.O.B SPIRIT OF LOVE

CBS 1970

The initials stand for Clive's Original Band, with the Clive in question being Incredible String Band founder Clive Palmer. Formed with John Bidwell and Mick Bennett, C.O.B were part of the thriving Cornish folk scene of the early 70s. *Spirit Of Love* was released on major label CBS after they were tipped off by Ralph 'Streets Of London' McTell.

FIRST PRESS £200 (ORANGE LABEL)
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

39 TUDOR LODGE TUDOR LODGE

VERTIGO 1971

Not to be confused with a doctor's surgery in Weston-super-Mare, Tudor Lodge's eponymous debut is a gently pastoral, progressive folk treat with many memorable moments. Released on the much-fetishised Vertigo label during the 'swirl' era and boasting beautiful fold-out sleeve artwork, *Tudor Lodge* is also a highly priced rarity. It's unlikely to be found in your local charity shop.

FIRST PRESS £1,500 (SWIRL, TEXTURED SLEEVE)
LATEST 2005 AKARMA £25

38 JETHRO TULL SONGS FROM THE WOOD

CHRYSALIS 1977

Jethro Tull's 10th studio album saw the band move away from their fully-fledged prog sound towards a more pastoral, folk-rock style. *Songs From The Wood* was a celebration of British pagan folklore. It was the first in a trio of albums (along with *Heavy Horses* and *Stormwatch*) that embraced Ian Anderson's affinity with folk – a few years earlier he had produced Steeleye Span's *Now We Are Six* album.

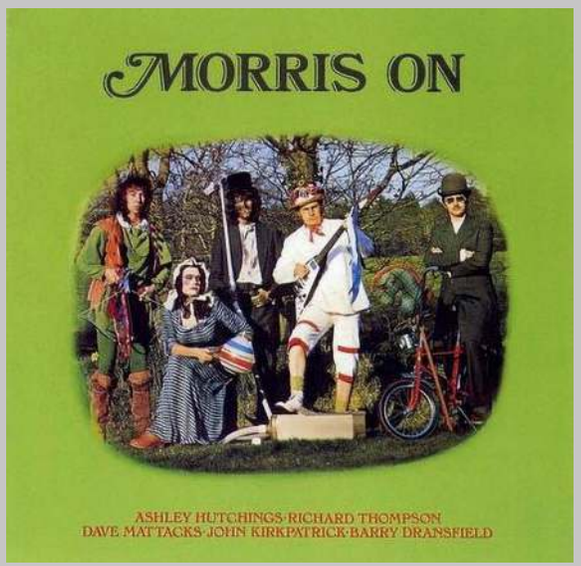
FIRST PRESS £8
LATEST 2017 CHRYSALIS £15

37 COMUS FIRST UTTERANCE

DAWN 1971

Comus were a short-lived but powerful folk-rock band that fused skronky prog rock with traditional folk to create an unnerving sound all of their own. *First Utterance*, the band's debut album, is much coveted by collectors and a first press fetches a pretty penny. The genuinely disturbing cover artwork was drawn in black ballpoint pen by lead singer Roger Wootton.

FIRST PRESS £900 (GATEFOLD)
LATEST 2018 MUSIC ON VINYL £20



36 ASHLEY HUTCHINGS… MORRIS ON

ISLAND 1972

Also credited to Richard Thompson, Dave Mattacks, John Kirkpatrick and Barry Dransfield, *Morris On* was an intriguing collection of lovingly souped-up versions of traditional English tunes. Thanks to the accomplished, heartfelt playing what could have come over as a half-arsed novelty record, is, in actual fact, an authentically enjoyable one. It boasts a great cover photo, too. Follow-up *Son Of Morris On* is also recommended.

FIRST PRESS £8

LATEST OUT OF PRESS

35 DANDO SHAFT DANDO SHAFT

RCA NEON 1971

Dando Shaft were a folkier incarnation of Pentangle and often added elements of Balkan music to their compositions. Critical acclaim was forthcoming, but this did not convert into commercial success. The band's Polly Bolton, added to the line-up for this their second album, nears the top of the list of forgotten folk-rock female vocalists.

FIRST PRESS £150 (GATEFOLD)

LATEST OUT OF PRESS

34 FOREST THE FULL CIRCLE

HARVEST 1970

Starting out under the name The Foresters Of Walesby, the abridged Forest were favourites of John Peel and performed several sessions for him. Second album *The Full Circle* proved to be the Birmingham-based prog-folk trio's last offering. The album has increased in price over the years and is now worth a bob or two.

FIRST PRESS £500 (GATEFOLD)

LATEST OUT OF PRESS

33 JADE FLY ON STRANGE WINGS

DJM 1970

Fly On Strange Wings is the one and only album from British folk-rock trio Jade. Favourable comparisons to early Fairport Convention were made at the time of release, mainly due to lead singer Marian Segal's vocal similarity to Sandy Denny. Indeed, the album's title track instantly recalls Denny's wonderful *Who Knows Where the Time Goes.*

FIRST PRESS £200 (GATEFOLD)

LATEST OUT OF PRESS

32 WIZZ JONES RIGHT NOW

CBS 1972

Named Wizz by his mum after a character from *The Beano* (magician Wizzy The Wuz), the pioneering guitarist started gigging in the late 50s and was an influential figure on the UK folk scene. 1972's major label *Right Now* was produced by Pentangle's John Renbourn, who also played sitar and harmonica on the album. Wizz is still gigging to this day.

FIRST PRESS £100

LATEST SPEAKERS CORNER 2011 £30 (GERMAN IMPORT)

31 TREES ON THE SHORE

CBS 1970

Disregarded as the work of blatant Fairport copyists on its release, the second and final album by Trees is a mix of traditional covers and self-penned originals. With a faint psychedelic edge, it has aged well and first-press copies are now much desired among collectors – not least for the Storm Thorgerson artwork on the sleeve.

FIRST PRESS £400

LATEST 2011 MUSIC ON VINYL £20

30 JAN DUKES DE GREY MICE AND RATS IN THE LOFT

TRANSATLANTIC 1971

The freewheeling progressive folk outfit's epically sprawling second album is made up of three lengthy tracks (*Sun Symphonica, Call Of The Wild* and the title track) that veer from traditional folk into Jethro Tull territory and back again. These days, an original pressing of the album is a highly desirable artefact, not least for its cover art.

FIRST PRESS £375 (GATEFOLD)

LATEST OUT OF PRESS

▶

The British Folk Rock Jukebox

KICK OFF YOUR HUSH PUPPIES AND GENTLY WIG OUT TO FOLK ROCK ON 45

FAIRPORT CONVENTION
SI TU DOIS PARTIR
ISLAND 1969 £10

RICHARD AND LINDA THOMPSON
I WANT TO SEE THE BRIGHT LIGHTS TONIGHT
ISLAND 1974 £8

STEELEYE SPAN
GAUDETE
CHRYSALIS 1972 £4

DONOVAN
SUNSHINE SUPERMAN
PYE 1966 £5

JOHN MARTYN
MAY YOU NEVER
ISLAND 1971 £25

THE PENTANGLE
LIGHT FLIGHT
BIG T 1969 £4

LINDISFARNE
LADY ELEANOR
CHARISMA 1971 £8

THE STRAWBS
OH HOW SHE CHANGED
A&M 1968 £10

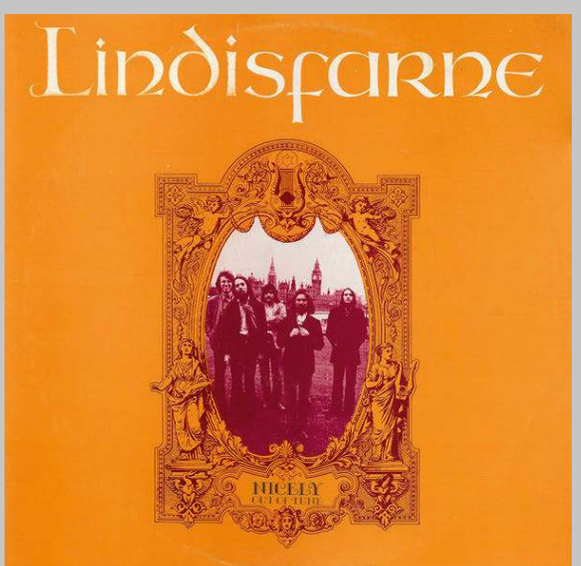
MICHAEL CHAPMAN
IT DIDN'T WORK OUT
HARVEST 1969 £15/£20

BERT JANSCH
LIFE DEPENDS ON LOVE
TRANSATLANTIC 1967 £5

TYRANNOSAURUS REX
DEBORA
REGAL ZONOPHONE 1968 £35

FOTHERINGAY
PEACE IN THE END
ISLAND 1970 £15

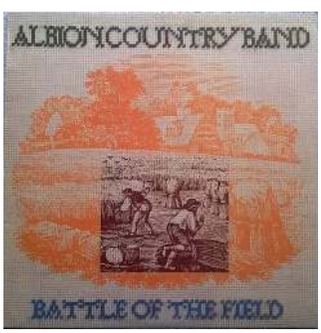
Newcastle's Lindisfarne were regarded as the Fairport Convention of the north



29 LINDISFARNE
NICELY OUT OF TUNE
CHARISMA 1970
While the band's post-Italia 90 version of signature tune *Fog On The Tyne* with the lachrymose Gazza should have been punishable by a jail term, Lindisfarne's ebullient debut is a pure joy. Album highlights include singles *Lady Eleanor* and *Clear White Light*, plus the chilling ballad *Winter Song*.
FIRST PRESS £40 (PINK SCROLL LABEL)
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

28 SPRIGUNS
REVEL, WEIRD AND WILD
DECCA 1976
Originally known as Spriguns Of Tolgus (something to do with a Cornish pixie and a tin mine), the folk rockers shortened their name and signed to Decca. The band's debut was produced by Steeleye Span's Tim Hart, but with the onset of punk *Revel, Weird And Wild* languished in the bargain bins of history.
FIRST PRESS £250 LATEST 2005 ACME £35



27 ALBION COUNTRY BAND
BATTLE OF THE FIELD
ISLAND 1976
Formed by folk-rock guru Ashley Hutchings as his wife's backing band, his wife being Shirley Collins, the Albion Band transformed into a unit in its own right and has contained all number of major English folk performers in its long and fluid history. Recorded in 1973 but only released three years later, *Battle Of The Field* is their finest moment on vinyl.
FIRST PRESS £8
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

26 MATTHEWS SOUTHERN COMFORT
MATTHEWS' SOUTHERN COMFORT
UNI RECORDS 1970
Matthews' Southern Comfort is the eponymous debut solo album by Ian Matthews, and was his first release after departing Fairport Convention in 1969. Helped out by a number of former bandmates, including Richard Thompson, the album saw Matthews move away from folk and towards a country-tinged sound.
FIRST PRESS £50 (YELLOW SWIRL)
LATEST 2011 VINYL LOVERS £15

25 MADDY PRIOR AND JUNE TABOR
SILLY SISTERS
CHRYSALIS 1976
Folk songstress June Tabor and Steeleye Span's Maddy Prior put their collaborative tonsils together to release a fine collection of traditional songs. Accompanied by a stellar cast of folk-rock musicians, including the ubiquitous Danny Thompson on bass, the two leads both turn in masterful performances. The pair later adopted the Silly Sisters name for subsequent projects.
FIRST PRESS £10
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

24 AL STEWART
LOVE CHRONICLES
CBS 1969
Before finding fame and fortune with the soft-rock classic *Year Of The Cat* (1976), Stewart was a folk-rocker, playing the first Glastonbury Festival and even sharing a London flat with a young Paul Simon. On 1969's *Love Chronicles*, he is backed by no fewer than four Fairports (Richard Thompson is credited as Marvyn Prestwick) and a certain Jimmy Page on guitar.
FIRST PRESS £25 (GATEFOLD)
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

23 JOHN RENBOURN
FARO ANNIE
TRANSATLANTIC 1971
Backed by Pentangle bandmates Terry Cox and Danny Thompson, John Renbourn's much-loved fifth solo album sees the virtuoso guitarist dip his toes into waters of American folk and blues, including a cover of Robert Johnson's *Come On In My Kitchen*. The versatile Renbourn also gets the sitar out when the mood takes.
FIRST PRESS £30
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

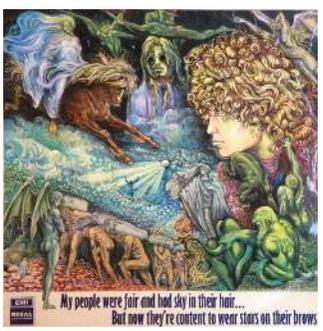
22 MR FOX
MR. FOX
TRANSATLANTIC 1970
Led by folk-scene performers Bob and Carole Pegg, Mr Fox were cut from the same hardcore traditional cloth as Steeleye Span, a band with which they had close associations. The septet took the name Mr Fox, which is also the title of the closing track from their eponymous debut album, from an English folk tale in which a young woman outwits a serial killer.
FIRST PRESS £50
LATEST OUT OF PRINT

▶

21 ECLECTION
ECLECTION
ELEKTRA 1968

Formed in London in 1967, the Eclection's international line-up was comprised of a Norwegian, a Canadian, two Australians and an Englishman. The name 'Eclection' was suggested by Joni Mitchell, who was a friend of the band. Signed by Elektra in the UK, the band's self-titled album took many of its cues from the US folk-rock scene.

FIRST PRESS £120 (GATEFOLD)
LATEST OUT OF PRESS



20 TYRANNOSAURUS REX
MY PEOPLE WERE FAIR...
REGAL ZONOPHONE 1968

Before international glam stardom with T. Rex, pop pixie Marc Bolan made up one half of lysergic folk duo Tyrannosaurus Rex, alongside the Tolkein-inspired Steve Peregrin Took. Debut album, *My People Were Fair...* is a singular psychedelic folk treat.

FIRST PRESS £80 (MONO)
LATEST 2015 A&M £25

19 TRADER HORNE
MORNING WAY
DAWN 1970

Psych-folk duo Trader Horne were named after John Peel's nanny and released one album on Pye's prog imprint label Dawn. The band comprised of Judy Dyble, who sang on the first Fairport album, and Jackie McAuley, formerly a member of Them. *Morning Way* is now regarded as a curious classic, much coveted by cratediggers.

FIRST PRESS £250 (WITH INSERT)
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

John Renbourn's tastes took in classical, jazz, blues and world music

18 BERT AND JOHN
BERT JANSCH AND JOHN RENBOURN
TRANSATLANTIC 1966

Pentangle's guitarists were sharing a flat at the time of recording this classic collaboration and the interplay between the two virtuosos is close to telepathic. The self-penned instrumental duets are utterly compelling, while the cover of jazz giant Charles Mingus' *Goodbye Pork Hat* is a singular delight.

FIRST PRESS £50/£60
LATEST 2015 SANCTUARY £25

BRIAN SHUEL/REDFERNS/GETTY

17 DONOVAN
SUNSHINE SUPERMAN
PYE 1967

Donovan's third album was a distinct move away from straight-up folk towards the psychedelic. Due to a record company dispute, his releases were held back in the UK throughout 1966. During this time, Donovan issued *Sunshine Superman* and *Mellow Yellow* in the US. To catch up with the US schedule, the UK release was compiled with tracks from both albums.

FIRST PRESS £55-£60
LATEST 2018 SUNDAZED £25

14 LED ZEPPELIN
LED ZEPPELIN III
ATLANTIC 1970

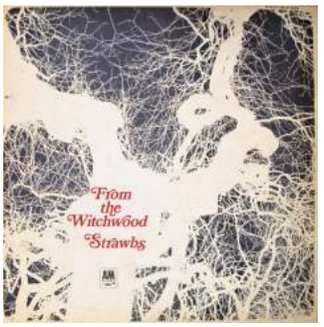
Not content with reworking old blues classics, rock juggernauts Led Zeppelin proved on their third outing they were equally adept at re-interpreting traditional folk songs. The band's mellower, pastoral side was brought out by the Welsh countryside, where the album was written, and is reflected in the sinister folky *Gallows Pole* and the acoustic hoedown of *Bron-Y-Aur Stomp*.

FIRST PRESS £220
LATEST 2014 ATLANTIC £25

13 ROY HARPER
STORMCOCK
HARVEST 1971

Not only did Led Zeppelin take their hats off to him, Jimmy Page also guested on a number of Harper's albums. On his magnum opus *Stormcock*, the guitarist is intriguingly credited as S. Flavius Mercurius and he adds a driving rock presence across his mercurial old mucker's most ambitious album.

FIRST PRESS £45/£50
LATEST 2016 SCIENCE FRICTION £25



12 STRAWBS
FROM THE WITCHWOOD
A&M 1971

Able to boast both Sandy Denny and Rick Wakeman as former band members, *From The Witchwood* was a transitional album for Strawbs. It took them further away from their acoustic folky roots and towards an electric prog-rock sound. The last album before pianist Wakeman jumped ship to Yes is a work of poetic joy.

FIRST PRESS £15
LATEST OUT OF PRESS

16 MICHAEL CHAPMAN
RAINMAKER
HARVEST 1969

Chapman first cut his teeth in Piper's folk club in Penzance during the 60s, alongside Roy Harper and John Martyn. *Rainmaker* showcased his talent not only as a songwriter, but also as a master guitarist. Much of his Harvest back catalogue has been reissued on the Light In The Attic label.

FIRST PRESS £100
LATEST LIGHT IN THE ATTIC £30

15 SANDY DENNY
SANDY
ISLAND 1972

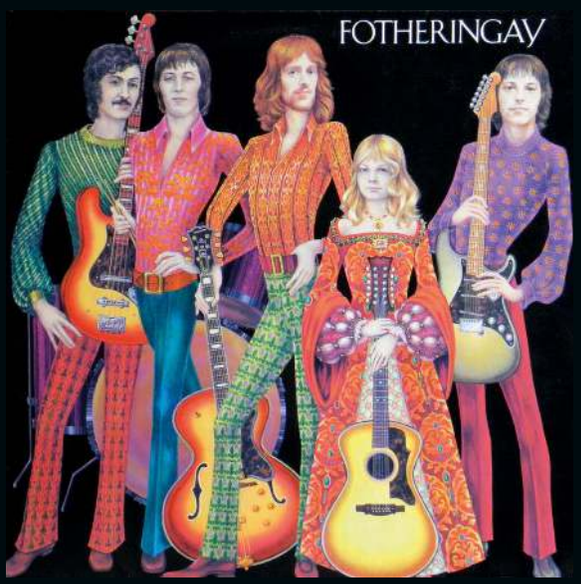
Denny possessed a beautiful voice, as her second solo album bears able witness. A more coherent affair than *The North Star Grassman And The Ravens*, *Sandy* is Denny's creative peak as a solo artist. As well as folk's usual suspects, the album features Flying Burrito Sneaky Pete Kleinow and New Orleans' Allen Toussaint.

FIRST PRESS £50-£60 (PINK RIM)
LATEST 2013 ISLAND £20

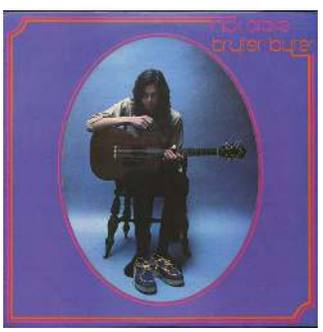
11 STEELEYE SPAN
BELOW THE SALT
CHRYSALIS 1972

A perennial charity shop favourite, Steeleye Span's first album for the Chrysalis label is the band's defining document. *Below The Salt* reworks traditional tunes in a rock context and even spawned a Christmas hit in the shape of the a cappella carol *Gaudete*. As a showcase for Maddy Prior's voice, it can't be beaten.

FIRST PRESS £5
LATEST OUT OF PRESS



10 FOTHERINGAY
FOTHERINGAY
HANNIBAL 1970
Named after one of her most-loved Fairport Convention songs, the short-lived Fotheringay were formed by Sandy Denny and her husband Trevor Lucas. The eponymous debut was a wonderful showcase for her peerless voice, especially on the hauntingly epic *Banks Of The Nile*.
FIRST PRESS £150 (PINK LABEL, 'I' LOGO)
LATEST 2018 CAROLINE £20



9 NICK DRAKE
BRYTER LATER
ISLAND 1971
Although singer-songwriter Nick Drake's leanings were far closer to folk than rock, on his second album he was backed by large chunks of Fairport Convention and former Velvet Underground noisenik John Cale. The result was one of the most affecting and artful albums ever committed to vinyl. A first pressing will cost you one of your arms and a leg.
FIRST PRESS £450 (PINK RIM)
LATEST 2013 ISLAND £30

8 LAL AND MIKE WATERSON
BRIGHT PHOEBUS
TRAILER 1972
Originally lost in the mists of time, *Bright Phoebus*, from brother and sister Lal and Mike Waterson, was given a renewed lease of shelf life via a reissue on Domino in 2017. A psychedelic-folk classic, the pair assembled a stellar cast of the scene's luminaries to create an ambitiously complex collection of magical songs.
FIRST PRESS £100
LATEST 2017 DOMINO £40

7 BERT JANSCH
BERT JANSCH
TRANSATLANTIC 1965
Recorded on a single microphone and a borrowed guitar in Jansch's kitchen flat, his debut album immediately established the Glaswegian as a major force in British folk. The brooding, plaintive tracks showcased not only his masterful fingerpicking, but also his ability as a songwriter. His ongoing solo career ran parallel with his work with Pentangle.
FIRST PRESS £55
LATEST 2015
TRANSATLANTIC £25

6 THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND
THE HANGMAN'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER
ELEKTRA 1968
The experimental minstrels adopted traditional Celtic folk songs and then weirded them right out by adding multiple trippy layers of world music sounds. Released on the UK branch of Elektra, *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter* is a psych-folk classic that received rave endorsements from the likes of Mick Jagger, Robert Plant and John Lennon.
FIRST PRESS £80 (MONO)
LATEST 2019
ELEKTRA £25

5 JOHN MARTYN
SOLID AIR
ISLAND 1973
The wild man of British folk dedicated his 1973 masterwork to his late mate Nick Drake, whose death inspired the album's title track. Martyn fused folk with elements of blues and jazz to create one of the movement's defining moments. It includes the very lovely *May You Never*.
FIRST PRESS £50 (PINK RIM)
LATEST 2018 ISLAND £20

4 SHIRLEY COLLINS AND THE ALBION COUNTRY BAND
NO ROSES
PEGASUS 1971
With gentle persuasion from husband Ashley Hutchings, the wonderful *No Roses* is the album where the established traditional folk star Shirley Collins went 'electric'. There are no fewer than 27 musicians credited on the front sleeve for performing on the sessions, including most of the *Liege & Lief*-era Fairports. It is, unquestionably, one of the scene's major albums.
FIRST PRESS £50
LATEST 2004 EARMARK £25

Richard and Linda captured (presumably) the morning after seeing the bright lights

3 THE PENTANGLE
SWEET CHILD

TRANSATLANTIC 1968

Showcasing Jacqui McShee's crystalline vocals coupled with the remarkable twin guitars of Bert Jansch and John Renbourn, Pentangle brought a jazz inflection to the world of British folk rock. Double album *Sweet Child* was the band's second release and provides something for everyone, with two sides comprising of a studio album and the other two a live set. All of which adds up to a landmark release from an important band.

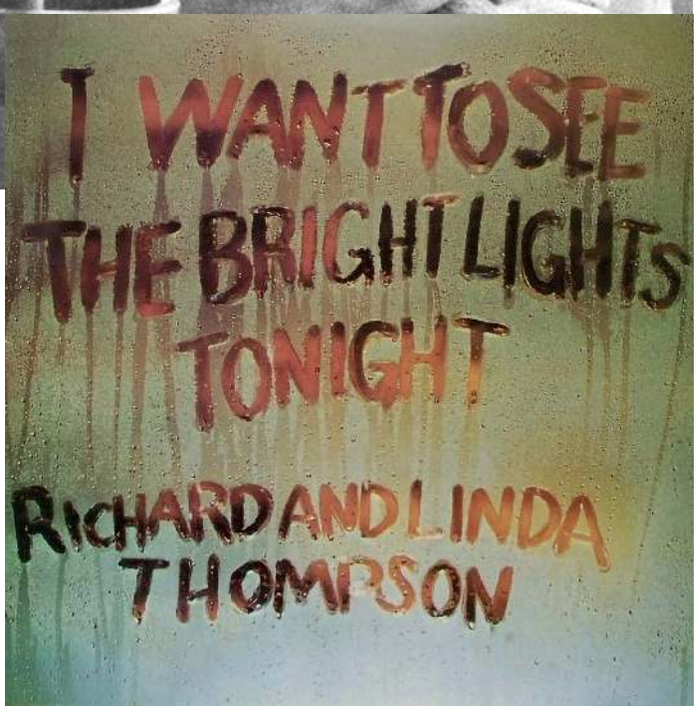
FIRST PRESS £50-£60
LATEST 2018 REAL GONE £20 (US IMPORT)

2 FAIRPORT CONVENTION
LIEGE & LIEF

ISLAND 1969

In the early days, Fairport Convention were in the sway of US folk rock and became known as the 'British Jefferson Airplane', but a revolving door of personnel changes meant that by the time of their legendary fourth album they would be playing electrified versions of traditional folk numbers. In doing so, they created an album of timeless beauty that is nothing short of the genre's defining statement.

FIRST PRESS £150 (PINK LABEL WITH 'I' LOGO)
LATEST 2018 ISLAND £20



1 RICHARD AND LINDA THOMPSON
I WANT TO SEE THE BRIGHT LIGHTS TONIGHT

ISLAND RECORDS 1974

After knocking Fairport Convention on the head, guitarist Richard Thompson teamed up with his vocalist wife to produce a darkly bleak but, ultimately, uplifting folk-rock masterpiece. Thompson's mastery of the craft of songwriting is at its peak and in Linda's wonderful vocals he found the perfect accompaniment. Some albums are more essential than others, and this one tops the tree.

FIRST PRESS £35 (PALM TREE LABEL)
LATEST 2014 ISLAND £20

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

The Secretly Group is more than just the Secretly Canadian, Dead Oceans and Jagjaguwar labels. It's also a distributor, publisher and indie powerhouse investing in side ventures as diverse as vinyl factories and arthouse films. **Gareth Murphy** meets the founders to uncover the success story behind America's coolest labels

Brand names are like decorative doorbells in the world of record labels. If they look cool and ring nicely, then they do their job. Only some open into deeper ideas that resonate. Secretly Canadian is one of the finest examples.

Coined by a gang of Midwestern college friends, the term began as a private joke wrapped in a nonsensical riddle. From the shock of discovering that Neil Young, The Band and Joni Mitchell were not actually American, 'secretly Canadian' became their own *Wayne's World* mutation of the hidden righteous concept. You didn't have to be actually Canadian, nor did you have to be an artist. If you were a natural born outsider able to see straight through mainstream America, you were secretly Canadian.

The time and the place were the mid-90s in a college town called Bloomington, Indiana. With a population of 120,000, a third of them students, Bloomington was, as it is today, an unlikely place to house America's biggest and arguably hippest indie label. But in the internet age, geographical remoteness is clearly no longer the logistical handicap it used to be.

In 1994, the main founder, Chris Swanson, enrolled at Bloomington's reputed University Of Indiana to embark on a Religious Studies degree. He'd grown up in Fargo, North Dakota, a bigger city near the Canadian border, albeit one that is "one giant suburb in the middle of nowhere".

In comparison, Bloomington was a historical town you could walk around. Set against a backdrop of prairies, rivers and forests constantly changing through the extreme seasons, it's a laid-back place of limestone buildings, coffee houses, health food stores, parks and the occasional monument. Both a haven for aging hippies and a hive of scientific research, Bloomington is what Americans call 'a blueberry in a tomato soup' – namely, an ultra-liberal town in the middle of an otherwise conservative state.

THE NEXT SEATTLE

Swanson's studies were quickly sidetracked. He ran a student magazine, he DJ'd at the college station, WIUX, he worked at video stores, and when he was stone broke, he even sold his blood. Ever curious and energised by social interaction, he befriended future co-founder Jonathan Cargill, a likeminded music freak, who hailed from a nearby town.

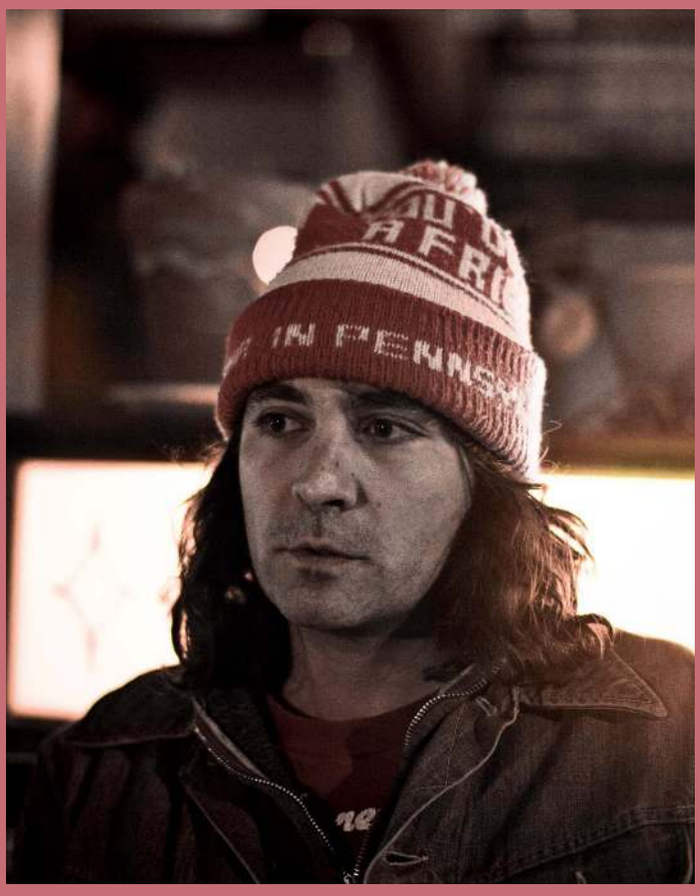
Working together in the dormitory cafeteria, they'd sort silverware, fill milk machines and cut bread while passionately discussing bands, in particular, Chicago's vibrant scene. At the college station, Swanson found another kindred spirit in Eric Weddle, a journalism student from Buffalo who became the trio's authority on experimental music.

At the time, Bloomington was tipped by *Billboard* magazine to be the 'next Seattle'. It didn't happen as predicted. But by running gigs, meeting bands and receiving phone calls from labels pitching their new releases, Swanson learned his first vital lesson about the music business: musicians and indies were just passionate nerds like himself, with most of them operating shoestring adventures from bedrooms, basements and garages.

In TD's, Bloomington's best record store, Swanson stumbled on the songwriter that would launch the label. He picked up a 45 intriguingly titled *Songs: Ohia, Nor Cease Thou Never Now.* With its Palace logo, he knew it had to be a discovery of Will Oldham, the self-producing songwriter who he followed closely. In his dorm, he played its two acoustic songs over and over on a battered turntable, spellbound by the haunting old-world folk of this young voice.

Introduced through a friend, Swanson began exchanging letters with the mysterious 21-year-old artist, Jason Molina, who had grown up in an Ohio trailer park listening to Hank Williams and the Carter Family. The 19-year-old Swanson had the Secretly Canadian name, so by the time he, Cargill and Weddle reached graduation year, they stayed on in Bloomington.

"From the very beginning, we were very interested in label culture," Chris Swanson



Sharon Van Etten is one of Jagjaguwar's most prized artists, while Adam Granduciel's War On Drugs have proudly flown the indie guitar flag for Secretly Canadian

reveals to *Long Live Vinyl*. "Before we even understood how to develop an artist roster, we had our favourite labels, like Drag City or Touch And Go, both of which were based in Chicago. We had absolutely no idea what we were doing, but we subconsciously started with Midwest references."

In June 1996, Swanson rented a house on the outskirts of Bloomington, a factor which lured his younger brother down from Fargo. Ben Swanson enrolled at Bloomington's music school, more as a pretext to join the party. "Chris had been sending me mixtapes of the music he was discovering. I'd already visited and loved Bloomington. So once he had the house, that was it!"

GLORY HOLE

The first Secretly Canadian release was *Glory Hole*, an album by little-known Fargo band, June Panic. Meanwhile, the Molina letters continued to be exchanged until the songwriter set a challenge: he would allow them to release his next album if they came to a showcase he was playing in New York. And so in July 1996, the Swanson brothers piled into their car and drove 14 hours through the summer heat to see Molina perform in a tiny Manhattan record store called Adult Crash. Lacking the money to stay the night, they talked with Molina for an hour, then drove another 750 miles home.

The result was Secretly Canadian's first run of cult creepers. Still operating as Songs: Ohia, Molina moved into the Swanson house. Naturally prolific, he would sit for hours at the kitchen table, writing words, sometimes using a low-volume drum machine that ticked hypnotically in the background like a clock. In a trance, he'd warble his poetry and gently rip open the air with an electric guitar cranked up so loud yet played so sensitively that amp hum became the hallmark canvass. His

> FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, WE WERE VERY INTERESTED IN LABEL CULTURE

records were extremely lo-fi for a period synonymous with super-production, and the effect was spine chilling.

Meanwhile, the four founders made a brave early decision to start their own distribution network. "Our first few releases were distributed by Cargo," explains Chris Swanson. "But we quickly realised that we were too small to get much attention. Plus it wasn't easy getting paid." They pitched their services to complementary indies who were experiencing the same difficulties.

"Our competitive advantage was that we had four people," explains Ben Swanson. They cherry picked five labels: Made In Mexico, based in Seattle; Western Vinyl in Austin; Jagjaguwar in Charlottesville; Megalon in San Francisco and Temporary Residence in Baltimore. Thus Secretly Distribution was born, just one year after the label's first album.

"We were scavengers," laughs Chris Swanson. "We found wood on a dumpster and built all the shelves in the basement ourselves. Trucks would arrive on the street and we'd all carry the boxes of records downstairs. That's how simple it started."

As volumes and interest grew, so did their name. "We knew we had something, but it took years to figure out what that was." The dream was to keep releasing creeper records of cult longevity, records like *Astral Weeks*, the founders' number one desert island disc.

RYAN PFLUGER

Angel Olsen and Kevin Morby are signed to Jagjaguwar and Dead Oceans respectively, under the auspices of Secretly Group head honchos (from top to bottom) Jonathan Cargill, Chris Swanson and Darius Van Arman

But unlike their references, "We wanted to keep it a little weird." For that, Eric Weddle was their in-house extremist. "I used to call Eric our aesthetic conscience," smiles Ben Swanson. "He was into really arty, experimental stuff. He went several layers deeper than either Chris or Jonathan."

In 1998, Weddle left to start his own label, Family Vineyard. Replacing him, enter Darius Van Arman, the founder of Jagjaguwar. A few years older, Van Arman was a college dropout, too involved in the underground scene of Charlottesville to complete his maths degree. He'd DJ'd at his college station, he'd also been running gigs in a local dive bar, and worked at an underground newspaper, juggling odd jobs to pay for his label.

The paths and appetites were eerily similar, except that Van Arman was unable to run Jagjaguwar alone from his bedroom. Chris Swanson eventually agreed to merge the labels and make him a full partner, on the condition that he move to Bloomington.

"Darius was much better than me at artwork and production," Chris Swanson admits. "He'd had training as an art director. So he ended up doing the sleeves for both imprints. That gave me more time to handle the accounting and create a royalties system, which we needed." Ben Swanson ran the distribution and Jonathan Cargill was the PR man, in charge of press and radio. All four contributed to A&R.

As a re-organised team, they intensified their output. On Secretly Canadian, there was a Songs: Ohia album almost every six months, until in 2003, Jason Molina began performing as Magnolia Electric Co. There was also June Panic, Swearing At Motorists, Danielson Famile, Damien Jurado, Richard Swift, Jens Lekman and reissues of Birmingham post punks, Swell Maps. On Jagjaguwar, there was Manishevitz, Oneida, Julie Doiron, Okkervil River, Pink Mountaintops, Black Mountain, Drunk, and offshoot Spokane.

In 2005, as the record industry slid into recession, Secretly Canadian scored its first 100,000 success with *I Am A Bird Now*, the debut album by Antony and the Johnsons. Two years later, an unknown Wisconsin songwriter named Justin Vernon came knocking. "The lyrics, the texture, we just fell under a spell," remembers Chris Swanson. The finished album, *For Emma, Forever Ago*, released under the band name Bon Iver, was a self-produced collection of songs Vernon had written in a remote cabin during a rough period. From that classic, the Bon Iver phenomenon kept snowballing to a 2011 Grammy award.

> "WE KNEW WE HAD SOMETHING, BUT IT TOOK YEARS TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THAT WAS"

By then, the Secretly Group had already become America's hottest indie. The War On Drugs joined. Then came Yeasayer, Electric Youth and Yoko Ono. On Jagjaguwar, there was Sharon Van Etten, Foxygen, Unknown Mortal Orchestra and one of the most compelling female songwriters of this last decade, Angel Olsen.

THE STRANGER DEPTHS

With so much growth and the hiring of A&R teams, they launched a third imprint in 2007. For discerning connoisseurs of alt-folk, Dead Oceans has now become its own sonic reference in dark beauty. Named after an image in Dylan's *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*, it's the label behind acts such as Phosphorescent, Slowdive, Kevin Morby, Dirty Projectors and other introspective curiosities from the stranger depths.

Now a happening label in its own right, Dead Oceans co-founder Phil Waldorf was made a partner of the group earlier this year. As for Secretly Distribution, it now carries a total of 22 other independent labels including Asthmatic Kitty, Family Vineyard, Suicide Squeeze, Sacred Bones, Trouble In Mind, Table Of The Elements, No Quarter, Cloud Recordings, Monitor, Western Vinyl, Numero Group, Temporary Residence, Awesome Tapes From Africa and Paradise of Bachelors.

CAMERON McCOOL ANNA POWELL TEETER BARRETT EMKE

THE SECRET'S OUT

10 CHOICE CUTS FROM THE GROUP'S CULT CATALOGUE

SONGS: OHIA
THE MAGNOLIA ELECTRIC CO.
2003, SECRETLY CANADIAN

Jason Molina left behind a life's work that deserves full inspection, but this is his masterpiece. Recorded quasi-live with a six-piece band, Steve Albini opened and closed doors to adjust acoustic depth mid-performance. Home to *Hold On Magnolia*, it's like a Neil Young classic flowing effortlessly from beginning to end.

DISCOGS £29

PHOSPHORESCENT
MUCHACHO
2013, DEAD OCEANS

Matthew Houck is a self-producing songwriter from Georgia. Deliciously melodic and aching with emotion, this was his sixth and most critically acclaimed album, following a gruelling tour marked by heartbreak, drugs and physical burn-out. Try to imagine Dude Lebowski's nephew coming down in a Mexican cantina, with Eno's *Apollo* playing loud on the jukebox.

DISCOGS £12

UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA
IC-01 HANOI
2018, JAGJAGUWAR

Recorded in Hanoi, this is the sixth and most experimental album by the adventurous UMO, a kiwi collective based in Portland, Oregon. A fascinating mix of gritty krautrock and Miles Davis jazz, this is not for the harmonically faint-hearted. The eerie flutes of *Hanoi 2* and the nine-minute *Hanoi 6* are worth the entry fee alone.

DISCOGS £11

THE WAR ON DRUGS
LOST IN THE DREAM
2014, SECRETLY CANADIAN

Lushly produced and oozing vibes, Philadelphia's coolest band have struck the balance between melancholy and outreach. The best driving album of the decade, *Lost In The Dream* is an appropriate title for a project that took two years to make while Adam Granduciel was battling depression. Medicine at its healthiest.

DISCOGS £15

KEVIN MORBY
SINGING SAW
2016, DEAD OCEANS

Formerly the bass player in Woods, at his very best Kevin Morby recalls the craft of the singer/songwriters of the 60s and 70s in his solo work, particularly Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen, and *Singing Saw* is his strongest album to date. Cool and controlled at every turn, the title track alone bears testament to his absolute mastery of his craft. And there's much more to come.

DISCOGS £13

ANTONY AND THE JOHNSONS
I AM A BIRD NOW
2005, SECRETLY CANADIAN

With his confessional vibrato evoking fucked-up cabaret, Antony Hegarty's debut came as a shock. For an English-born, NY-based artist, it's curious that *I Am A Bird Now* was welcomed only by Secretly Canadian (he dubbed Bloomington 'Chicken Village'). The Indiana indie couldn't find overseas partners until Rough Trade eventually stepped up.

DISCOGS £11

BLACKOUT BEACH
FUCK DEATH
2011, DEAD OCEANS

Prepare yourself to be pleasantly unsettled. While many synth experimentalists try to be weird, this oozes natural psychopathy. Dare wander these beaches and you'll be seeing angular seascapes of sci-fi impossibility. But it's the lone singer who'll fascinate and terrify. His name is Carey Mercer, and you're trapped in his dreams.

DISCOGS £5

BON IVER
FOR EMMA, FOREVER AGO
2007, JAGJAGUWAR

Right from the moment the stylus first bumps down, you're snowed into a Midwest cabin watching Justin Vernon experiencing a spiritual catharsis. The sound is sparse, the fields are white, but it's the vocals that send this landmark album into the rafters. Sparse, elegant and achingly beautiful, this is Wisconsin's own *Astral Weeks* moment.

DISCOGS £15

BLACK MOUNTAIN
DRUGANAUT 12"
2005, JAGJAGUWAR

Loud, free and trippy, this is mushroom rock with a distinctive Vancouver vibe. They've five albums, but this EP is a thing of immense wonder. 24 minutes of energy, beginning with its brilliant 8-minute title track, then *Buffalo Swan*, another epic journey through inner space. There's a deluxe reissue of their eponymous debut album with this EP as a bonus.

DISCOGS £12

ANGEL OLSEN
BURN YOUR FIRE FOR NO WITNESS
2014, JAGJAGUWAR

Originally an adopted child from St Louis, Missouri, Angel Olsen has a touch of the shaman about her. More lo-fi and underripe than her most recent productions, she's reaching the height of her powers on this collection of songs. It culminates in the superlative *Windows*, via other dark gems such as *White Fire* and *Lights Out*.

DISCOGS £22

In their 40s and increasingly vital to America's alternative music scene, the founders have become indie chieftains, advising smaller labels. Still as obsessed, Chris Swanson collects first presses on vinyl. Although vinyl accounts for only 20% of the group's revenues, they take such pride in the format, they've invested in Independent Record Pressing, a vinyl factory in New Jersey.

Not surprisingly, they're a company in serious demand. But what does it take to get signed by such purists? It all comes back to that 'Secretly Canadian' idea of modesty, spirit and belonging to the tribe. As Darius Van Arman puts it: "When you're thinking about signing a band, it comes down to a simple question: do I like them as people? Because no matter how good the music is, it's a long-term partnership."

Chris Swanson concurs. "It's true. Real friendship makes for better work, because it won't ever feel like work." As for choosing which artist goes on which imprint, "We follow the energy," says Ben Swanson. "Sometimes there's an artist preference, but because we know the label identities so intimately, it's usually obvious to us who goes where."

Still headquartered in Bloomington, although in a larger building, the first thing visitors see at the entrance is a Songs: Ohia tribute to Jason Molina, who died at the age of 39, drowned in his own demons. As for the old house where it all began, Chris and Ben Swanson's mother is now the proud inhabitant.

The group currently employs more than 120 staffers spread across multiple locations. They've branch offices in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and London. In Paris, Berlin and Amsterdam, they have PR offices feeding local media with releases. Ben Swanson mans the head office in Bloomington. Chris Swanson now lives in Los Angeles handling West Coast operations. Darius Van Arman lives in New York, covering the East.

For its size and multi-tentacled structure, Secretly is often described as America's answer to the Beggars Group, the London indie behind

Artists such as Yoko Ono (Secretly Canadian), Bon Iver's Justin Vernon (Jagjaguwar) and Phosphorescent's Matthew Houck (Dead Oceans) all operate in the Secretly Group's ecosystem of inter-related companies

XL Recordings, 4AD, Matador and Rough Trade. They've undeniably learned a trick or two off their older and bigger English cousin. But Secretly has never been influenced much by punk nor even dance music. Largely unconcerned by urban trendiness, Secretly has a natural handle on America's rural underground – the wild unknown country of Dylan, Townes Van Zandt, Steinbeck and Harry Dean Stanton.

MODERN LIBERALISM

Nothing better illustrates Secretly's character than its arguably irresponsible excursions into art-house cinema. Whereas most record labels chase radio and dancefloor DJs, Secretly's natural partners are film and TV directors. The group now earn as much revenue from audio-visual synchronisation as they do from vinyl. They got a bigger glimpse of what could be when Rick Alverson, Jagjaguwar's longest-running artist, called Chris Swanson and announced he'd almost finished his first movie.

> REAL FRIENDSHIP MAKES FOR BETTER WORK, BECAUSE IT WON'T EVER FEEL LIKE WORK

"I just couldn't believe what I was hearing," laughs Chris Swanson, still in shock. "All on his own, he'd put together and directed a feature. But he needed some money to finish it. So I called up the partners and we all agreed to help him." Having notched up a total of nine albums on Jagjaguawar (four with Drunk, five with Spokane), Alverson was the group's other Jason Molina figure.

"They're not afraid to fail," Alverson tells *LLV* with a knowing laugh. In nine years, he's made five features: *The Builder*, *New Jerusalem*, *The Comedy*, *Entertainment* and *The Mountain*. If you're curious to see why Chris Swanson believes these stunningly shot adventures on celluloid might be the proudest moments of the network's recent history, treat yourself to Angel Olsen's video for *Windows*. Directed and photographed by Alverson, it's a clock-stopping masterpiece. Through his stark depictions of ordinary people struggling to face life in otherwise beautiful landscapes, "I'm taking aim at the cancerous psychic distortion of modern America," whispers Alverson.

This is the very essence of Secretly. It's a kinship of intensely spiritual men and women who understand time, space, tone, sincerity, understatement and even silence. Central to their thinking is the belief that modern liberalism, for all its freedoms and technological progress, has tragically failed to fill the moral and existential vacuum left by our religious systems collapsing.

The most important record company of our times? We'll probably have to wait 10 years to find out. Virtually nothing they release is aimed at today's mainstream. Having built an ecosystem of inter-related companies, they'll keep firing strange records into the longer arc of counter-cultural time, towards some place we haven't yet reached. But already, one gets the feeling that whatever spiritualised middle-of-nowhere perspective they've managed to project onto the whole world, it has already captured the spirit of the early 21st Century.

IAIN MACMILLAN GRAHAM TOLBERT && CRYSTAL QUINN JACOB BLICKENSTAFF/REDUX

DIGGING FOR VICTORY

In his final column, veteran record dealer **Mark O'Shaughnessy** signs off with his thoughts on the future of the 'black gold' he trades in

This will be my last Digging For Victory column for *Long Live Vinyl* and I'd like to sincerely thank the editorship for having me write for them for the last three years. I've really enjoyed putting my thoughts down on paper for you all over the past few years, but all good things must come to an end. The pleasure has been all mine.

Even though peddling vinyl, both new and old, has been my profession for nearly 30 years, I still feel that same buzz when a stack of albums is brought in as I did when I bought my very first UK Jazz LP collection back in 1992, what seems a lifetime ago.

For my final column, I'm going to talk about what I see for we 'record nuts' in the immediate future, which means that the incredible (UK-only) 7" BlueBeat/Ska/Rocksteady/Beat/Soul collection that came in last week will have to wait…

I feel that the immediate future for vinyl is bright and healthy. The resurgence of record collecting, the manufacture and distribution is very, very strong and, if anything, still booming. I'm constantly surprised at the variety of people who come into our Bath store to buy vinyl and the variety of what they buy, collect and listen to absolutely staggers me. Each and every strata of society is represented within the customer base of our store.

I've seen many collecting trends come and go down the years: progressive rock, Northern Soul, funk, rare disco 12"s, UK folk, reggae 7"s… but, like most fads, these things come and go and it's the bands, eras and musical styles with the greatest longevity that last the test of time. That's why we are now seeing another huge resurgence in interest in rare blues, US rock 'n' roll and rockabilly (with a 10" shellac 78 going through eBay for $15,000 earlier this year). I can only see those particular areas getting stronger and stronger. The internet certainly helps to flush out many previously unknown items. If you've got any blues, rock 'n' roll 10"s, shellacs or 78s lying around in the loft gathering dust (heaven forbid!) now is definitely the time to get them out and get them sold, people.

I also see prices in general continuing to rise, especially for Mint/Near Mint copies of classic LPs such as *Sgt. Pepper*, *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, *Our Satanic Majesties*, *Led Zeppelin I* and the like. These landmark LPs never stop selling, and they never will.

A lot of 'new' bands are now releasing ever-more elaborate packaging with each album they put out, with everything but the kitchen sink thrown in: CDs, cassettes, photographs, autographs, 3D glasses, T-shirts, download codes… it's mind-boggling, and this is exacerbated around Record Store Day. These releases are already rising hugely in price and will one day soon become some of the most collectable items on record collectors' radars.

I'm not sure how long it will be before the 'vinyl bubble' bursts, but I don't see it happening for at least another four or five years. It gives a lot of people a lot of happiness and joy, so that will help keep the zeitgeist going a good while longer.

I feel that the immediate future for vinyl is bright and healthy

Publications such as *Long Live Vinyl* have helped to push the whole vinyl thing on; it really is all about involving younger people (not just old grunts like me!). I definitely believe that this 'new approach' helps to enthuse young people, raises their expectations around new releases and gives them a better understanding of why they should be listening to vinyl over mp3s or CDs. And also why it's worth investing in a decent turntable, in order to enhance the whole listening experience.

I believe record companies make more money from selling vinyl than they do CDs. The dealer/wholesale price of most new release vinyl is on the high side, but people seem happy to pay £20-£25 for new records, so who am I to argue with them? It wasn't something I ever saw happening, but it has become the 'norm' again and I can't see it falling away just yet.

When they were at their peak, I thought they were here forever, but I can now, honestly, utter these three words with a sneaky smile: "CDs are dead". Absolutely nobody wants them anymore. What can I say? Good riddance to an always overrated format. Who said convenience was a good thing anyway? It certainly wasn't me.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the people who took time to reach out to me about my musings in these pages. Over and out, and thanks ever so much for reading. ●

Mark O'Shaughnessy is the owner of Resolution Records in Bath and has been a professional record dealer since 1993

TALKING SHOP

Strange Victory Records

BELFAST

The Northern Irish capital has seen the slow erosion of its once plentiful record shops over the past three decades. **Cara Gibney** visits Strange Victory to meet a pair of vinyl obsessives who are reversing that trend

It's hard to keep them on track, Darren Smyth and Jeff Doherty. We are in Strange Victory Records, their recently unveiled, independent, much needed record shop, run with business partner and fellow music nerd, Sinead Green. The pair are planning a forthcoming Edwyn Collins in-store, and opening bundles of posters for upcoming shows that need promoting – Lankum, She Drew The Gun, Jon Spencer & The Hitmakers… As we talk, a potted history of Belfast's record shops becomes a thread running through the conversation. "Was it Sun Records & Tapes that replaced Smyths For Records? Was Dr Robert better than Backbeat?"

Everyone over a certain age misses the plethora of indie record shops that were such a staple of their formative years. The important alternative sub-cultures and musical identities created, bands formed, albums, singles, tapes, posters, tickets, zines, and scenes… We wore our music like a badge of honour. And in Northern Ireland we had an added element to the sense of sanctuary those record shops afforded. Away from the orange and green, from the security and controls.

Fast forward a few decades and Belfast is a very different place. In so many ways for the better, but in regard to the survival of record shops, not so much. And like many other high streets, Belfast's city centre has had a punishing last few years. Much-loved Sick Records and Head Records fell to the economic sword, which was bruising for the scene in the city, and beyond. Then, a major fire in an iconic building cordoned off the main thoroughfare of Royal Avenue for a period. But, in the midst of this, three people were plotting, refurbishing, stocking and organising. On Record Store Day 2019, Strange Victory Records popped several bottles of fizz – and to much delight, relief, DJs, tributes, music and crate digging, they opened their doors for business.

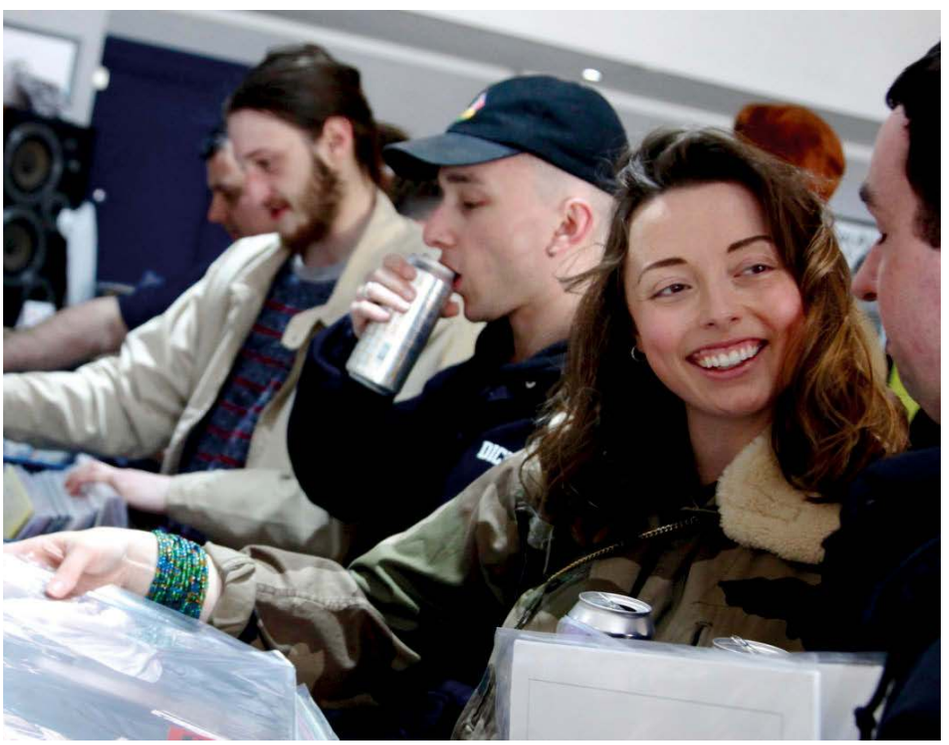
"We opened Strange Victory Records because there was an obvious gap in the market in terms of people selling new vinyl in Belfast," Darren states simply. "There's been a space now for the last couple of years and we felt it was about time we stepped up and did this." Jeff's take is slightly different. "Darren and I have been talking for years about opening a shop, but it's been so long, he's been saying it's never going to happen. He annoyed me so much that I said, 'Right, we're doing it'. He thought he was bluffing me, but I bluffed him. Don't try to get into those mind games with me! Anyway, we're getting older. If we don't do it now, we're never going to do it. And if somebody else had done it we'd be fucking ragin'."

But somebody else did do it, luckily as one third of their venture. "Sinead is basically the one who organises us," Darren concedes. "She's got really good ideas, and this just wouldn't have happened without Sinead. We're a couple of grumpy old bastards, she's the one who gets everybody geed up."

Sinead Green is Strange Victory's self-employed bookkeeper with a wealth of diverse studies and qualifications including sound engineering, music technology, property development, letting management, business negotiation, and more. The years working in these various fields have helped her build up skills that underpin any business. But there's more than straight-up business acumen that matches Sinead to Strange Victory Records. When we spoke, she was at home relaxing, after DJing the night before in Belfast's Voodoo Bar. She confesses to having, since childhood: "an encyclopedic knowledge of really crap one-hit wonders. All the shit of the day. I seem to retain the information." Or, as Jeff puts it: "Sinead's a music head, really knowledgeable. When she DJs, you would realise you're listening to something like, say, *Primitive Painters* by Felt. She really knows her stuff."

And Jeff would know. Originally from Derry, his music obsession started early. "Since I was a teenager in the 80s, my Saturdays would involve getting the train up from Derry to Belfast to go round record shops. There were so many of them then." His own record shop, Dragon Records, is a well-established

STRANGE VICTORY
RECORDS
MOET



institution with music lovers and record collectors. Renowned for his own in-depth music knowledge, the resulting expertise is evident in the selection he offers in his shops. "You know what to buy," says Darren, encouraging him to talk about what he brings to Strange Victory Records. "I bring years of hurt, and all the money, and supposedly my expertise in music." When they stop laughing, he shrugs. "I've had a lot of retail drilled into me over the years, and music knowledge… but let's be honest, it's always the records that you've picked that are more exciting to sell. You can give yourself a wee slap on the back when they sell."

Darren agrees. "A lot of it's instinct, you can't listen to every record. It's about knowing artists, having a good ear for quality, about being tuned in I suppose. And we are, we have to be. Between the shops and everything else that we've done, we've been at this for a long time. So, if we don't know it by now, we're bloody idiots opening this shop."

> **We're getting people in the shop from across the board. It's not just boring blokes in their corduroys**

COMMUNITY MATTERS

Darren is the man behind Strange Victory Presents, the Belfast-based promoter responsible for bringing acts to the city, ranging from Jenny Hval to Daniel Johnston, from Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings to K-X-P. "I've been promoting for the past 30 years," he explains. "I've worked for labels and in record shops, done some radio plugging, I've played in a band. A bit of everything."

He lived in various parts of Britain for 16 years before moving back home in 2000. "I started putting shows on in Belfast in 2003. There were about 100 under the name of Fortune Cookie, and I've put on about 250 since I changed to Strange Victory."

Jeff isn't content with this answer and adds an important key element to the story: "Darren is considered the person in Belfast who puts on quality acts. That's why the shop's called Strange Victory Records. We've got a name that's long been associated with good music."

The mix of skills, experience, contacts, tastes and personalities is a steady foundation for the shop. "Between the three of us, it works well because there's always a swing vote," Sinead tells us. "At any point, one of us will be the voice of reason who can weigh things up and think about what the others have said and what the others want." However, one point of order that has never been in contention is the fact that Strange Victory Records sells vinyl.

"Jeff is the only person in town I know who never switched to CDs," Darren points out. "Progress does not necessarily mean that things are going to get better," Jeff responds, with an air of having discussed this before. "This is why primarily we're selling vinyl. And it's why I did not buy CDs, because there's something in a record. It's not all about listening to it, it's also the artwork, and it's to do with something which is tactile. People of a certain age miss that, and younger people are getting it. I know there's a bit of a trend but it's all finished if younger people don't get it."

"There's the resurgence in vinyl sales that's been ongoing for quite some time," Sinead goes on to tell us. "That whole thing about vinyl, the crate digging. There are people who enjoy doing that for a sport, finding the rarest most curious thing… vinyl has more scope in terms of its look and its aesthetic. All the different colours, all the variations that people want to buy. Vinyl is collectible, I don't really know anybody who is an avid CD collector, but I know avid vinyl collectors."

"The music in the shop covers a broad church," she continues. "There's an idiosyncratic selection through Darren and Jeff's choices. Let's face it, what Jeff doesn't know about vinyl isn't worth knowing. There are a lot of curiosities and strange pieces of music that you may not necessarily see elsewhere… the choice of stock also feeds into Darren's gigs that he books, so there's a certain identity there. But we don't want anybody to come to our shop and think: 'I don't know any of these records, I won't go back there'. We're here for everybody, exclusivity can work against you sometimes."

This is an attitude rooted in the original idea of the shop. As Darren explains: "The whole shop is for people to use the space in whatever way they want. For people to tell us what to bring in. We've been having quite a few in-stores, from punk icon Jordan to local acts. In fact, that's one of the highlights of running the shop, supporting local music. We have plenty more in the pipeline, that's why we built the stage by the window, and we have the outside area, too. We're building a hub for the music community."

"Building a community is what it's about for me," Sinead points out. "People like to go to a place where there are others who know what they're talking about, and to talk to like-minded people." And by Darren's measurements, it's working. "We're getting people in here from across the board. It's not just boring blokes in their corduroys. Well, a few, but not all… We're a destination to meet with people and hear about music, listen to music, talk about music, and just have a cup of tea if you don't have anything to say."

Where would they like to be in five years? "You remember shops that have been there for 10, or 20, or 30 years," Jeff replies. "In five years' time, everything will be OK. In 20 years, we'll both be dead." As everyone contorts in laughter, Darren manages to state: "We will." Eventually, Jeff finishes his answer. "Actually, maybe we'll be dead in six years. So, yeah, everything will be OK in five years. But at least we'll die happy." ●

Stranger Things

THE SHOP'S TOP 5

David Holmes
THE HOLY PICTURES

"We've got a long history with David here at Strange Victory Towers. Be it promotions, DJing or just hanging out. Possibly the finest artist to come out of NI, this album is the best of his incredible back catalogue. It seems appropriate that it's related to Belfast."

The Murder Capital
WHEN I HAVE FEARS

"Always part of Strange Victory's remit was to do in-stores. So when the 40th anniversary reissue of Joy Division's *Unknown Pleasures* came out we got some friends to perform the album. And recently, The Murder Capital toured shops to promote their new album *When I Have Fears*. Since they've listened to the odd Joy Division record, it seems fitting to put them together!"

Oh Sees
FACE STABBER

"One of the special things about being an indie is that a lot of really good labels do 'indie only' editions of their releases. There are so many I could mention, but I'm going for *Face Stabber* by the Oh Sees. For a band so prolific, they keep the quality high, and live they're just superb."

Pye Corner Audio
SLEEP GAMES

"A highlight of last year was DJing with Julian House from Ghost Box. Pye Corner Audio were supposed to play, but had to drop out. I'm on my second copy, so that shows you how much damage it's got. I wouldn't rule out buying a third in the future."

The Jesus & Mary Chain
PSYCHOCANDY

"*Psychocandy* was such an important album at the time and one that still stands up. That glorious racket of *Never Understand* still gets us. They looked great, their sleeves were great, they were noisy and they also had beautiful slower songs."

...Hungary For Vinyl

In an exclusive extract from his new book *Vinyl Countdown*, old-school record collector **Graham Sharpe** recounts his cratedigging exploits across the globe, starting with a diversion from a horseracing trip to Budapest

Staying at a swanky hotel in Budapest in 2015, the plan was to experience one of Hungary's most important race meetings of the year, but I was equally interested in seeing some of the capital's most important record shops. No guide book seemed to have much to say about such an important part of the local cultural scene.

So, how to find out? Plucking up my courage I decided to ask one of the impeccably attired, stuffy-looking reception staff whether they could help. I sidled up to one of the elderly gents manning the desk, currently writing in a ledger. He looked me up and down, and asked slowly, emphasising the second word he spoke somewhat doubtfully, I felt:

"Yes… sir?"

"This may sound a little odd, but I was wondering whether you might be able to advise me as to the whereabouts of any vinyl record shops in the city? Please. Sorry."

More looking me up and down. Probably thinking I'd wanted to ask about brothels but had lost my nerve.

"No, sir. I do not have any idea where such establishments may be located…"

"Oh, I'm sorry for bothering you." I began to slink away, shamefaced, embarrassed for asking such a question.

"… but, sir, my colleague here is a very keen record collector himself and I am sure he will be only too happy to assist you when he finishes his telephone call."

Never judge a book, or hotel concierge, by its cover. Sure enough, the colleague was only too pleased to show off his knowledge, quickly picking up a map and marking off several locations for me.

Needing no further invitation, I strode off into the 90+ degree (Fahrenheit. I don't do Centigrade) heat of the afternoon to look for the three shops highlighted on my map.

I soon found one of them. There it was, just past a bar that opened on to the pavement where a man was sitting who, as I passed, raised his hat, looked at the one I was wearing, and greeted me with:

"Hello, Mr Sherlock Holmes!"

Baffling. I was wearing a trilby.

Nonetheless, I managed to investigate what turned out to be a very well-stocked shop, with rows of shelves neatly laid out, albeit as you might expect, mainly containing foreign issues of records. It was called, I believe, Laci Bacsi Lemezboltja and I was surprised not to meet any Watford supporters inside – the interior was so very yellow.

I found a Jackie Lomax album to add to my increasing collection of same, and it set me back the best part of 20 euros. Annoyingly, I resisted snapping up a Chris Farlowe record which I didn't recognise, and which seemed a little on the pricey side. I would later identify it as the scarce *From Here To Mama Rosa*, made with The Hill, which goes for £60 in top condition.

When, next, we arrived in Berlin, with little to do other than sup a local beer I was very pleased when one of the girls on the trip with us came over with a tourist map which she had marked with an 'X'. "I've found a record shop for you to visit, Graham, while we take Sheila on a Rhine boat trip," said Julie, handing me a marked map. It took me 90 minutes to find the shop, whose window was packed with desirable discs, and a note explaining:

'Closed for refurbishment. Reopening in two months'.

I'd probably vote for Norway, well, Oslo, anyway, as the best European venue I've so far discovered for ever-eager record collectors to slake their vinyl thirst. Slaking other kinds can be somewhat pricey here. However, records were far from exorbitant and both myself and my recent convert to vinylism, Mike H, were enthusiastic about our trek around the shops before and after we went to the races, where we watched the Norwegian Derby which was won for the first time by a horse ridden by a female jockey.

Unusually, I backed the winner, meaning I had a few more pennies to spend on vinyl, including a record I'd been intending to acquire for some while – the 1977 debut solo album from former Moody Blues stalwart, John Lodge, entitled *Natural Avenue*. This is not a difficult LP to find, but my star discovery in Oslo's inviting Rakk & Ralls (you can probably guess what it means) was a copy of Jimmy Campbell's *Half Baked*, a very scarce, fully brilliant, gatefold Vertigo album from 1970. 150 of your English pounds, says *RRPG*, but here for just 15 Krone.

In Spain's beautiful northern coastal resort, San Sebastian, I stumbled across a record shop with a window display suggesting that I had passed away and been immediately reborn in

vinyl heaven. Obscurities galore from the 1960s, but the shop was never open during the entire time we were there.

Other locations to yield great booty include the French town of Nantes, where I picked up a top collection by reggae greats, the Pioneers, and the obscure, eerie acid-folk album, *Dreaming With Alice* by Mark Fry.

In Rennes, we passed a record shop, from the interior of which some evidently 1960s psych rock was pouring. As I stopped and began to cross the threshold, I was warned in no uncertain terms by those with whom I was travelling that I had 30 seconds inside at most before they continued to explore the unfamiliar local streets. I just had time to use my much-neglected A-level French to find out that the record was by a group called Hunger, but I had to wait until we returned home to track down a copy of this 1968 stunner.

Other European cities in which I have found excellent vinyl outlets include Zurich, Warsaw, Stockholm, Paris, Madrid, Lisbon, Amsterdam – although I have yet to frequent Red Light Records in the latter location which, I learn from website the vinylfactory.com is 'run out of a former prostitution window'.

I didn't find any specific record shops in Pasadena, USA – or stores as they would have it, there – but in one of the larger shopping malls was an antiques/collectables store which had within it a vinyl section. I browsed through it, finding three LPs which were to my taste – one by Moby Grape, another by the Lemon Pipers and one by… sensitive rock fans had better look away now… Tiny Tim. It was hot there that day. The dealer adamantly refused to offer even the smallest discount for buying all three, but as I wanted some souvenirs to take home, I paid the full whack.

Back in our hotel room after enjoying an evening drink or two, we settled down for a peaceful night's sleep prior to visiting Santa Anita racecourse the next morning. That didn't happen and we had to change rooms in a hurry, escorted by a member of staff, after upsetting the couple next door by complaining about the drilling coming from their room after midnight. I'd gone to investigate the noise, only to be chased back to our room by a man waving a gun about and shouting that he'd be quite happy to use it. On me. I called reception, who sent someone to move us, and to remove the neighbours. At least I had the presence of mind to grab my records when we relocated.

On my one visit to New York I was not overly impressed by the record shops, although I must point out I was taking Sheila there for a special birthday trip. She was keener that we should look around Macy's handbags (she was impressed) than go searching for vinyl. I did find a record stall in a Chelsea area market, where I bought the Grateful Dead-connected *Kingfish* LP.

"I'd vote for Norway, well, Oslo, as the best European venue I've so far discovered for record collectors to slake their vinyl thirst"

When we were in Princeton, the university town not that far from the Big Apple, we were in a charming coffee shop when one of our group of horse racing enthusiasts was asked about his impressions of Princeton. He declaimed loudly enough for everyone in the place to hear, "I think this is the one place I've been to in America that I could envisage living in – if it wasn't for the Yanks!"

At this point I thought I'd slip away before the violence started, as I had noticed a nearby premises called the Princeton Record Exchange (prex.com) which looked promising. I walked in and found myself in a veritable vinyl heaven and CD sensation.

I'd genuinely never seen so much music assembled in one place, and at such affordable prices. Only restricted by how much I could carry back on the plane, I charged in and started buying – The Polyphonic Spree, Blues Traveller (five of their albums), a couple of Jeff Healeys, a Stevie Nicks, a George Thorogood, and these are just the ones which came to hand when I took a quick look around my collection for items still branded with a 'Princeton' sticker. None of them cost me more than $2.99!

In San Francisco during 2019 I again tried the 'ask the guy at reception' technique and again struck vinyl when he told me: "Amoeba on Haight Street used to be a bowling alley – it's huge, with a huge selection." The shop claims 'the best crate-digging in the world' and I wouldn't argue too much. Yardbirds box set, Creation double LP, Blues Project, Marvin Gardens, Schwartz-Fox Blues Crusade… I could have stayed for hours but it wasn't allowed.

I treasure all of these foreign record adventures, but ZZ Top's *Gimme All Your Lovin'* always reminds me of my most surreal record-related experience in another land. I was in Moscow in the early 1980s, just as Mikhail Gorbachev was endeavouring to reform his country, as part of a group of British newspaper 'hacks' travelling under the umbrella of the National Union of Journalists.

When we journeyed from Moscow to Leningrad, as it was then still known, we had a dream-like night on the train, drinking strong tea from the mobile samovar which made its way up and down the corridors on a regular basis, swigging slightly stronger liquids from bottles bought for just that purpose, and listening to the KGB man, who told us he'd been deployed to keep an eye on us to ensure we weren't seeking to undermine the Soviet Union, and played us spot-on renditions of Beatle tunes on his saxophone.

Earlier we had found ourselves in a couple of cabs speeding through a capital city which appeared almost deserted apart from more queues for who knew what essentials of life. We were disgorged into a hotel reception area and escorted down to a night club as disreputable and tacky as any to be found in either London or New York.

There extravagantly dressed, evidently privileged male locals were quaffing champagne and puffing on huge cigars with rather younger, scantily clad female companions in close attendance. We looked out of place in our jeans and jumpers and were concerned that we would not have enough roubles to pay what were likely to be the exorbitant prices of drinks. Still, we ordered rounds of beers, having asked the waiter how much they would cost and how we could pay.

"Sir, we accept American Express and all major credit cards…"

Relieved, but not a little astonished, we walked into the discotheque area of the club, to hear the pounding sound system pumping out ZZ Top's very Western rock music. *Gimme All Your Lovin'* seemed more appropriate in these surroundings than ever before. I looked at the guy who had organised the trip and raised my glass: 'A toast to Perestroika… Cheers!'

In July 2018 a good friend of mine took a trip to the Balkans – then sent me a photograph of 'the record shop in Ljubljana for your collection'.

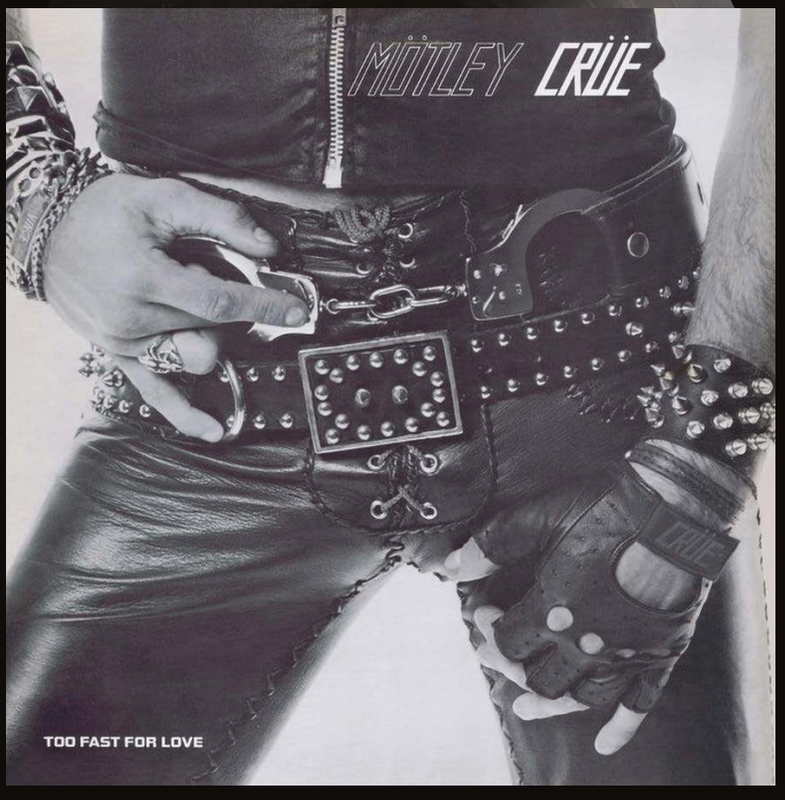
It appeared to be called Spin Vinyl and, along the canopy overhanging the shop front was what I took to be the shop slogan: 'rock 'n' roll ploscarna'.

I was intrigued by the photo and demanded more info: 'Didn't go in, no idea what it means. Looked like there was a lot of vinyl inside'.

Sometimes you just have to accept that not everyone shares your passions…

Graham Sharpe's* Vinyl Countdown *is published by Oldcastle Books (www.oldcastlebooks.co.uk) and is out now

Choice Cuts #33



Mötley Crüe

TOO FAST FOR LOVE

LEATHÜR RECORDS

The first pressing of the glam metallers' debut was limited to a mere 900 copies, as **Glen Bushell** explains

Several bands can lay claim to be the inventors of glam metal, but if you were to put a pin in one of the early cornerstones of the genre it would have to be Mötley Crüe's 1981 debut, *Too Fast for Love*. It was raw, unabashed heavy rock that drew from the Crüe's early influences of The Sweet, Sex Pistols and Alice Cooper.

The first pressing was released on Leathür Records, founded by Mötley Crüe and their manager, Alan Coffman. It is believed that only 900 copies were originally pressed before the band were quickly signed to Elektra and the album was subsequently reissued. The first pressing has a black and white sleeve, with the now iconic shot of Vince Neil's leather-clad crotch paying a sideways homage to The Rolling Stones' *Sticky Fingers* album. The text is also in black and white, as opposed to the red lettering that would feature on the Elektra pressings going forward.

A couple of other key differences to look for when spotting the first press are on the rear of the sleeve, the centre of the image is left blank, whereas on the second and third issue a pair of sunglasses have been added in. Also, the original image on the insert features Nikki Sixx with his arms crossed; he is in a slightly different pose on the later pressings.

True first pressings rarely surface, but this is the holy grail for Mötley Crüe collectors, with Mint condition copies changing hands around the £2,000 mark. ●

Wax Facts

MÖTLEY CRÜE
TOO FAST FOR LOVE
BLACK VINYL
1981

£2,000

LOVE MUSIC?

DISCOVER A WORLD OF MUSIC – FILLED WITH EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS, RARE PHOTOS, CLASSIC ALBUMS, FASHION, COLLABORATIONS AND MUCH MORE!

Order your copy today from

anthem-publishing.com/musicspecials

Hi-Fi Heaven

HOW TO BUILD THE PERFECT SETUP FOR 2020... WHATEVER YOUR BUDGET

With Christmas over and the January blues biting hard, it's the perfect time to hunker down and build a new hi-fi system that does your records justice. Whatever your budget, **Jason Kennedy** is on hand with a series of systems that combine the best turntables, amps and speakers your money can buy

Putting together a separates hi-fi system with a turntable as the front end, or source, can be great fun. There are alternative options at all but the lowest budgets, and mixing and matching the different elements can sometimes deliver large differences in the resulting sound.

Generally speaking, the source – in this case the turntable, arm and cartridge – is the most critical element. The sound quality of any system depends on the source being able to extract maximum information with minimum distortion from the vinyl.

The best that the amplifier and speakers can do is deliver the musical signal without adding distortion or losing information – it's a 'least worst' scenario. The system that gets the most signal into the room without adding its own characteristics is the best.

We have looked at four price points and put together systems that we feel offer the best value that can be had for the money in question. Naturally, the bigger the budget, the greater the choice and the greater the expectation. But even a sub-£500 system can sound very enjoyable if you pick the right bits and set them up carefully. So don't put the speakers next to the turntable for instance; if you can put them on a separate shelf or bracket, that will give them a better chance of performing well.

The system that gets the most signal into the room without adding its own characteristics is best

Cables have not been included in these systems because you should only need speaker cable, and in all but the cheapest systems you should be able to persuade the dealer to throw in this part of the system. If you can't, it might be worth shopping for service rather than price.

We hope our guide is of some use to you and contributes to your listening pleasure. Until the lottery win comes in, that is, when you'll be able to install the most expensive system known to man.

£500 System

This is as low as you should go if you want to hear your records as they were intended to sound. It gets you decent components that will give years of entertainment if looked after and, if you're lucky, be worth something when you come to upgrade

Audio Technica AT-LP3

£159 eu.audio-technica.com

This is a fully automatic turntable with good build quality and a built-in phono stage, as well as the option to take a signal directly from the cartridge to your amplifier. We recommend using the phono stage in the amplifier below for best results. This Audio-Technica is fully featured with an easily replaceable AT91R cartridge, speed switching and end-of-side arm lift, yet also delivers a balanced and revealing sound that while not exactly refined is surprisingly good for a deck at this price. There are, of course, alternatives and some are even cheaper, but they can't compete with the sound of this A-T.

Also try Pro-Ject Primary E £159

Onkyo A-9010

£199 uk.onkyo.com

This Onkyo is a remarkable amplifier for the money; it has a slew of features, including headphone output, phono stage and remote control, and eschews digital inputs in order to deliver sound quality that belies its price. With a real-world 44 watts under the bonnet, it has enough power to drive most sensible speakers and has a nimble and engaging sound that makes listening fun. If you enjoy the ability that vinyl has to sound solid and real in the room, the full-bodied nature of its sound will impress. Those after good definition will also find a lot to like in this remarkably competitive amp.

Also try Pioneer A10AE £179

Q Acoustics 3010i

£149 qacoustics.co.uk

Q Acoustics design in the UK and manufacture in China to keep costs down. This compact standmount is not their least expensive offering, but it has excellent build quality and decent drivers in an attractively curvy cabinet. The 3010i has a decent 100mm main driver and classy 25mm tweeter that combine to produce sound that is smooth and effortless, and so not likely to emphasise any limitations in the source or amplifier. What it's good at is making your favourite records sound full-bodied and natural. And as that is essentially the strength of vinyl, this is a quality to be prized.

Also try Mission LX2 £149

£750 System

This price point immediately allows for a more serious turntable, amp and speakers with a fit and finish that's classy and sound quality that's even more so. We have dedicated as much budget as we can to the amp as the turntable in this system, because both are difficult to do well for less

Pro-Ject Essential 3

£259 project-audio.com

Pro-Ject have a knack when it comes to building decent budget turntables, and the latest version of the Essential lives up to its name. With a gloss-wrapped wood platter, manual speed change and aluminium arm with a decent Ortofon OM10 cartridge in its headshell, the Essential has what it takes to open up your records and allow them to sing oh so sweetly, or aggressively (if it's *Raw Power* by The Stooges for instance). We like the energy it digs out of the grooves and the way it delivers the lively but clean sound that only a good vinyl pressing is capable of. It's also strong on imaging and can precisely place musicians in a large-scale soundstage, which is what good stereo is all about.

Also try Rega Planar 1 £249

Cambridge AXA35

£299 cambridgeaudio.com

Cambridge is part of the Richer Sounds empire, which gives the brand a price advantage that few can compete with. The AXA35 is not the most powerful budget amplifier around, but the 35-watt output rating is no indication of just how musically expressive it can be. There are no digital inputs onboard, nor Bluetooth, but it does have a headphone output and phono stage in a sleek bit of casework. What matters is that this is an amp that will get you to the next level of vinyl appreciation, thanks to its ability to deliver the spirit and thrill of the music.

Also try Yamaha A-S301 £259

ELAC Debut 5.2

£199 elac.com

This speaker may be relatively affordable, but a lot of effort and expertise has gone into making it one of the most highly regarded budget options. Its silk dome tweeter and aramid fibre woofer combine to deliver remarkable sound quality for the money. It needs a decent amp, like the Cambridge, however, so don't cheapskate on the quality of your power. In this system, the Debut 5.2 will be open, revealing and even handed with excellent timing, qualities that are hard to define, but it makes the difference between a system that sounds nice and one that you just have to keep listening to.

Also try Acoustic Energy AE100 £199

£1,250 System

This is where things start to get really interesting. The extra budget allows for high-quality components that have not had to be built down to a price point for a start, meaning you can include a serious front end, such as the Rega P2. This is the sort of system that reveals just what it is about a good pressing that's so fabulous

Rega Planar 2

£399 rega.co.uk

The latest incarnation of an evergreen Rega classic gives you fresh insights into just how good vinyl can be. It looks simple, but nearly 50 years of experience means that it's remarkably sophisticated under the skin with a high-quality RB220 tonearm, 24v synchronous motor and an acrylic laminated plinth. The P2 can dig out details that you didn't imagine were in the grooves of your favourite albums and present them in such coherent fashion that you won't be able to sit still, which sounds crazy but that's what a decent turntable can do – and this is nothing if not decent.

Also try Pro-Ject RPM1 Carbon £389

Marantz PM6006 UK

£279 marantz.co.uk

The most highly lauded budget amplifier under £300, the PM6006 is UK tuned and has the timing skills to deliver vinyl sound of a high calibre as a result. It combines phono, analogue and digital inputs with a good quality of build and finish. It even has tone controls, but leave those and loudness alone and listen to the music. This integrated amp is capable of dynamic, engaging sound with a good source, such as the Rega P1, and has the power to control a decent loudspeaker. The Marantz has a handle on that most elusive yet crucial audio quality: musicality. Listen and you'll hear what we mean. **Also try** NAD 316 BEE v2 £299

Bowers & Wilkins 607

£399 bowerswilkins.com

Bowers & Wilkins is a British brand with some very smart engineers. Their smallest serious speakers can produce powerful sound thanks to the R&D that has trickled down from much pricier options, and offer genuinely high resolution for the money. Combined with the turntable and amplifier above, the sheer emotion and exuberance this speaker can deliver might surprise those unfamiliar with very good compact speakers – and that's before you start to notice how good they are at revealing fine detail. More important than finesse is the 607s' ability to engage the heart and mind of the listener.

Also try Dali Oberon 1 £349

£2,000 System

Our highest-budget system is a no-compromise combination of components that impress on all counts: build quality, feature count and most importantly sound. Of these, features are the least important and often get in the way of the end result, hence the manual speed change P3, all-analogue Brio amp and single-wire Oberon 5 speakers. The money in each case has been spent where it will reap the biggest sonic rewards, but they have left a little to deliver great finishes, too

Rega Planar 3/Elys2

£649 rega.co.uk

The second Rega in this round-up is the redoubtable Planar 3, the turntable that made the company's name back in the day. However, because it has been evolving ever since, it is still the turntable to beat in the hard-fought middle market. With the Elys2 cartridge, it reflects the exact nature of each record so well that describing the sound is very much like describing the music. In essence, it reveals why vinyl remains the format of choice for so many of us. It does this by delivering class-leading timing and musical energy in a controlled and refined manner that makes many other sources sound crude and dull.

Also try Project X1 £699

Rega Brio

£599 rega.co.uk

Rega's entry-level amplifier looks deceptively simple and has the bare minimum of features, but that's because it's been pared down to the essentials in order that as much budget as possible can be allocated to the parts that count. As a result, it's a genuine scorcher with more get up and go than a coach full of cheerleaders and more than enough power to keep a speaker such as the Dali under control. There are no digital inputs, but it has a rather good phono stage and the power and sophistication to deliver the musical goods in clear-cut fashion.

Also try Audiolab 6000A £599

Dali Oberon 5

£699 dali-speakers.com

This Dali floorstander has clever tech, including wood fibre cones in the main drivers coupled to a large tweeter, which gives it the scale and capability to do justice to the Rega turntable and amplifier. The extra volume provided by the larger cabinet means that it's not only big enough to deliver bass that can really kick, but also means it will play at seriously entertaining levels without breaking a sweat. More importantly, it does so whilst delivering sound quality that will impress and engage in equal manner, letting you enjoy the power and subtlety of any great piece of music.

Also try Q Acoustics Concept 40 £699

Reviews

REISSUES & COMPILATIONS **94**
NEW RELEASES **100**
BOOKS **107**
NEW GEAR **108**

MARIA ALZAMORA

Supergrass

THE STRANGE ONES
BMG

It was a case of you don't know what you've got until it's gone with the mighty Supergrass. Now a comprehensive boxset looks to set the record straight. **John Earls** feels alright

WHAT'S INSIDE

6 LPS
Original albums as picture discs: *I Should Coco; In It For The Money; Supergrass; Life On Other Planets; Road To Rouen; Diamond Hoo Ha*
13 CDs
Original albums, unreleased live shows, radio sessions, B-sides, demos, remixes
7" Single
Caught By The Fuzz/ Richard III 2020 Remixes
Extras
52-page book, 4 colour posters, 8 button badges

With Supergrass happily reforming for a celebratory tour, a reissue campaign was inevitable. Under the same title, you can have both a new Best Of or a boxset. The 2LP 26-song Best Of takes the bold step of having Supergrass' singles run in reverse chronological order. It means that it's not until 12 songs in, on the penultimate song on Side Two, that a huge hit arrives via *Grace*. But that does at least make listeners acknowledge how truly great Supergrass remained, even once the public rather foolishly started taking them for granted: singles such as *Diamond Hoo Ha* and *Brecon Beacons* were as great as the smashes we all know and love.

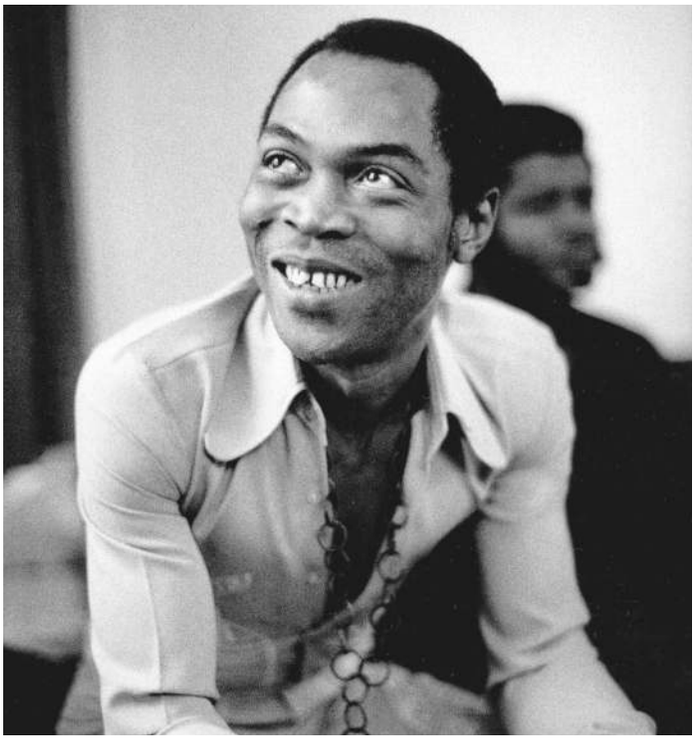
The pleasant surprise is just how comprehensive the boxset edition of *The Strange Ones* is. Be warned: for vinyl lovers, it's a conflicting package. In all, the boxset contains Supergrass' six albums, plus an additional seven CDs of B-sides, demos, live songs and four previously unreleased songs. This means there are comfortably over 100 additional songs. The additional boxset ephemera is better than usual, too, especially considering the fair £150 price tag.

Alongside new band interviews, a book features essays on each album by writers such as Sylvia Patterson and Adam Sweeting. You get eight badges, four posters and a 7" featuring new mixes of *Caught By The Fuzz* and *Richard III*. Really, what is there to moan about? OK, well some people will object to the vinyl being via the dreaded picture disc. *LLV* has spoken to Supergrass about this for our next issue and their explanation for vinylists will make sense. Put it this way: watch this space. It leaves *LLV* in the unusual position of thoroughly recommending a boxset where by far the biggest concern is the vinyl itself.

There's absolutely loads going on across those extras, with the live CDs equating to a live album's worth of songs from the tours and radio sessions accompanying each record. You could easily get a great additional Supergrass B-sides album worthy of Suede's *Sci-Fi Lullabies* or Pet Shop Boys' *Alternative* from the 38 B-sides. Of the four unreleased songs, a frenetic cover of The Police's *Next To You* is the pick, thanks to an especially chewy Mick Quinn bassline. Look closely, and you'll see Supergrass strangely ignored remixes as a way of alleviating the pressure of all those B-sides, with only a daft Bentley Rhythm Ace mix of *Sun Hits The Sky* standing out.

Put on those (relatively good) picture discs and you'll be reminded how brilliant Supergrass were beyond the hits. They were an unusual proposition of, like Squeeze, being a great singles band who were able to keep the quality up across their albums. Of the six, only *Road To Rouen* sounds dated, with *Life On Other Planets* and the whirlwind punky farewell *Diamond Hoo Ha* especially ripe for reassessing. It appears that the reunion tour will be a no-messing Best Of affair, and who can argue with that? Like the boxset, it seems Supergrass are out to give people what they want all over again. **8**

They were an unusual proposition, a great singles band who were able to keep the quality up across their albums



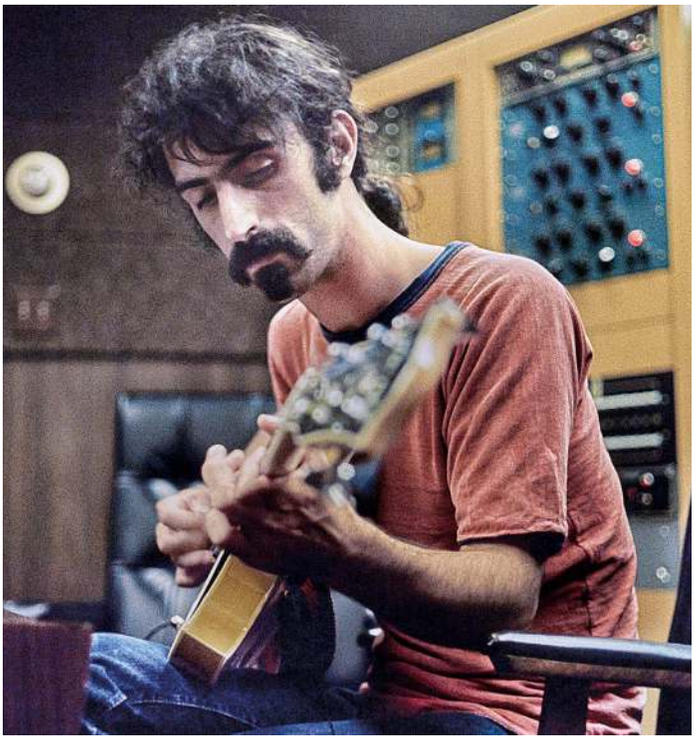
Fela Kuti

COFFIN FOR HEAD OF STATE

KNITTING FACTORY

A bassline starts hesitantly. Soon, it's augmented by jazz chords played on electric guitar, after which a second guitar picks out a three-note melody. Suddenly, what sounds strangely like a toy organ cranks up, accompanied by congas and hi-hat until a voice groans to signal the entrance of a punctuating brass section, and soon we're carried away on a 10-minute journey of funk, jazz and soul. And that's before you even get to the vocals on Side 2. 1981's remarkable *Coffin For Head Of State* may be Fela Anikulapo-Kuti and Africa 70's ultimate work of towering Afrobeat genius. It was central to Knitting Factory's fourth boxset of his work curated by Erykah Badu in 2017 and frankly, even if it wasn't as musically muscular as it is, *CFHOS* would be important just for its harrowingly harsh backstory. Based on Kuti's experience of government soliders raiding his Nigeria home in 1977, it's a syncopated document of state sponsored torture and rape, which culminated in the tragic death of Kuti's beloved mother. Her coffin was later delivered by members of Africa 70 to the doorstep of dictator General Obasanjo. There's even a photomontage of what happened on the album cover. In the unlikely event that readers are unfamiliar with Kuti's irresistible grooves, don't worry about the politics getting in the way of the dancing; it only enhances it. As well as CFHOS, all the albums previously available in the boxset are now available as standalone releases, so you if you don't yet own any Fela, now is a good time to start. ***Ben Wardle***

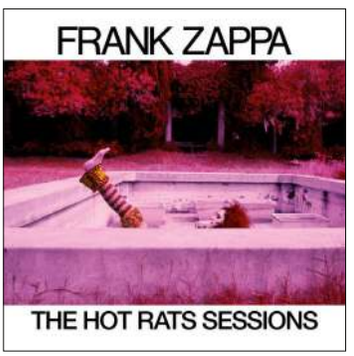
9



Frank Zappa

THE HOT RATS SESSIONS

UMC



Preconceptions about Frank Zappa are rife. He's either a genius or an irritating polymath. His second solo album, *Hot Rats*, is therefore either one of the greatest albums of all time or just the one which turned out to be too jazzy. The 1969 release was his first proper Top Ten hit and Universal are celebrating its 50 years' existence by releasing the entire *Hot Rats* Sessions over six CDs as well as repressing the original on a shade of vinyl, which echoes the colour of Andee Nathanson's infrared cover photo of Christine Frka emerging from the abandoned swimming pool. Zappa's Mothers Of Invention releases frequently featured social and political satire and wilful experimentation – tellingly, the slew of releases prior to *Rats* had the working title of 'No Commerical Potential'. *Hot Rats* swerves all this, crucially by placing the one remaining Mother, keyboardist Ian Underwood, at the centre of the project and letting him dominate. Album opener, *Peaches En Regalia* is the dictionary definition of jazz fusion, features 16 year-old Shuggie Otis keeping it funky on bass and still lifts the hairs on the back of the neck. Zappa's mate Captain Beefheart dominates track two *Willie The Pimp* and provides the only vocal on the album. Side Two's *The Gumbo Variations* is a psychedelic jazz wig-out over 16 minutes. As Matt Groening states in his liner notes to the overindulgent CD boxset, "you know how great *Hot Rats* is […] with *The Hot Rats Sessions* we know it's even better." Best stick to the vinyl, then. *Ben Wardle*

9

DAVID CORIO BILL GUBBINS

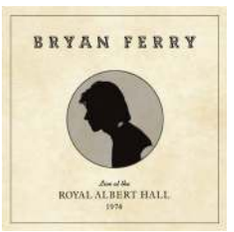
Elton John
LIVE FROM MOSCOW 1979
UMC

Much bootlegged after it was broadcast on the BBC, 40 years on from Elton's historic tour behind the Iron Curtain comes this recording of his show at Moscow's Rossiya Hall. Remastered from the Beeb's original analogue tapes and shorn of the usual bombast that accompanied many of his 70s shows, this stripped-back affair presents Elton alone at the piano with only percussionist Ray Cooper on hand for the second half. The piano playing is naturally terrific; Elton shines on both the confessional ballads and harder-rocking tunes. Alongside the more obvious greatest hits, it's the curveballs here that grab your attention, from the lesser-known *Skyline Pigeon* to an expansive Creedence-rivalling cover of *I Heard It Through The Grapevine* and, despite being forbidden from playing it, a cheeky career through *Back In The USSR*. ***Steve Harnell*** **8**

Pale Saints
THE COMFORTS OF MADNESS
4AD

Though it begins with a squall of Sonic Youth-style guitars, Pale Saints' 1990 debut was as prescient as it was of its era. It only made number 40, but it's remembered passionately by those who listened closely, straddling an uneasy but exciting line between proto-dream pop, jangly indie, US college rock and the arthouse styles for which 4AD was known. Most of all, it sounded like early Ride, who acknowledged their debt with an almost indistinguishable cover of *Sight Of You*. Ian Masters' vocal was perhaps feyer, and *Little Hammer*'s pastoral arrangement camouflaged a psychedelic complexity, but *Insubstantial*'s harmonies and guitar swells pre-empted *Chelsea Girl*, while *Time Thief* developed into something noisier and more hurried. The double LP adds meticulous demos and a Peel session. *Wyndham Wallace* **8**

Bryan Ferry
LIVE AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL 1974
BMG



Virtually as soon as Roxy Music ended, Bryan Ferry's music started sounding as suave and elegant as his sartorial appearance. He's touring again soon. You can guarantee it'll be debonair and, in the absence of any new material, just a little staid. Ferry's first two solo albums were covers sets, too. But, as this live album documenting his first ever solo gig demonstrates, Ferry's approach to the classics wasn't always so respectful. There's a berserk energy in how Ferry throws himself at *These Foolish Things* and *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes*, while *Sympathy For The Devil* becomes a wonderful high-camp vaudeville metal onslaught to rival Alice Cooper. It's as odd as anything Brian Eno ever did, a 100mph whirlwind that would be magnificent to see Ferry attempt now. Right here is really why Ferry had to become a pop star. ***John Earls*** **7**

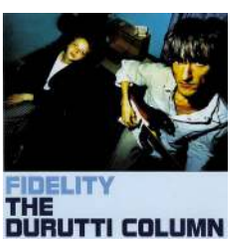
Ash
TEENAGE WILDLIFE: 25 YEARS OF ASH
BMG

Having released the 7" singles boxset *'94-'04* only last year, Ash go all-eras with their brand new Best Of. The 2LP version features 24 songs, compared to 36 on the CD/streaming set. There is a deluxe vinyl version, but that merely features a fancy lenticular sleeve for an extra £25 rather than, y'know, the missing 12 songs. Vinyl-buying fans of Ash deserve a lot better. At least the infectious recent single *Buzzkill* makes the cut, highlighting how Ash's ability to make wildly exciting punk-pop hasn't diminished with age. Celebrate the teenage joy of *Girl From Mars* and *Burn Baby Burn* all over again, thrill at possibly discovering later gems like *Machinery* and *Annabel* for the first time, then wonder why *Uncle Pat* and *Walking Barefoot* aren't here at all. Full marks for the tunes, a contemptuous eyeroll for the compilers. *John Earls* **6**

Various Artists
DOWN IN JAMAICA
VP RECORDS

Celebrating 40 years of VP Records, *Down In Jamaica* is a considerable 98-track boxset comprising of four CDs, four 7-inch singles and four 12-inch singles. There's also a large-sized booklet detailing the hits, rarities, and lesser-known history of the world's largest reggae label. The 45s are a real treat, with revived tracks from The Congos (*Fisherman*), Freddie McKay (*La La By Woman*), Linval Thompson (*Don't Trouble Trouble*) and Romain Virgo (*Fade Away*) all backed by their accompanying dub versions. VP's involvement in reggae runs from roots to dancehall via lover's rock, which makes for a joyously upbeat experience. The only quibble would be the mix of formats contained in the box, with CDs and vinyl rubbing shoulders as though it was the most natural thing in the world. Diversity is to be celebrated, but surely there are limits. ***Gary Tipp*** **7**

The Durutti Column
FIDELITY
LES DISQUES DU CREPUSCULE



Having dived into familiar analogue territory for 1994's *Sex And Death*, Vini Reilly offered a slight return to 1990's *Obey The Time*, where he'd explored Manchester's dance culture. This time, he was subtler, resulting in a lengthy collection that's aged better. There are signs of the time, of course: shuddering vocal samples and operatic melodies decorate *Abstract Of Expression*, and his voice is underpinned by *Remember Me*'s baggy beat. *Sanko* dispensed with guitars in favour of skittering percussion and dreamy sequencers, while Ellie Rudge's delicate vocals pre-empted chillout. The trumpet-embellished *G&T* displayed Reilly's Spanish influences more prominently, while *Storm For Steve* could pass for his earliest work, and *Guitar For Mother* is worthy of 1987's *The Guitar And Other Machines*. *Wyndham Wallace* **8**

Big Star

#1 RECORD/RADIO CITY

CRAFT RECORDINGS

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE

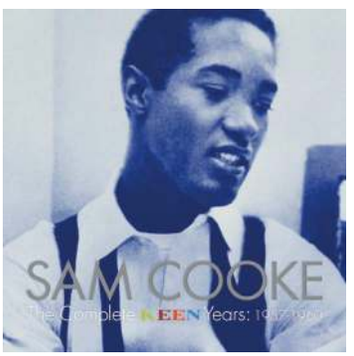
Arguably the most acclaimed cult band in music history, Big Star's near misses are the stuff of legend. Record company fumblings, rotten luck and a sound that in the early- to mid-70s felt out of step with the hard-rocking likes of Zeppelin, Purple, Free et al, Alex Chilton's Memphis outfit should have been huge. There's a bitter irony that their debut album was titled *#1 Record* – it sank virtually without trace, of course, despite being uniformly excellent. Chilton shared songwriting and vocal duties with guitarist Chris Bell and both are adept at rugged glam as well as wistful introspection. There's the wonderful swelling of *The Ballad Of El Goodo*, a Byrdsian take on directionless teenage years (*In The Street*) and the hippie idealism of *The India Song*. For the stomping *When My Baby's Beside Me* they're The Beatles and Stones within a single song. Big Star's second album, *Radio City*, is a tougher proposition, with Chilton's rough-hewn rock 'n' roll dominating. Wantaway striker Bell was largely absent from recording sessions and his brief input now goes uncredited. The grinding ascending guitar riff of *O My Soul* is a stunning opener, in *September Gurls* the band minted one of the all-time great power-pop gems and their Southern swagger seeps into the groove of a riffy *Mod Lang*. Meanwhile, the sinister *You Get What You Deserve* has a brooding majesty about it. In terms of getting their just desserts, Big Star had every right to live up to their band name. ***Steve Harnell***

9

Sam Cooke

THE COMPLETE KEEN RECORDINGS (1957-1960)

ABKCO



In 1957, having spectacularly fallen out with Speciality Records, who'd released his gospel work with The Soul Stirrers, Sam Cooke hooked up with the newly minted Keen Records. By then, he was as much a sex symbol as spiritual singer, forced by a passionate single, *Lovable*, clandestinely released by one 'Dale Cook', to part with his band, for whom his blood had become too hot. That said, his acknowledged solo debut, *You Send Me*, which leads off this boxset of Cooke's five, secular Keen LPs, was always destined to become his first number 1. It may seem less revolutionary today, but its blend of R&B, doowop and gospel laid a new path for soul music. In truth, plenty of Cooke's output during this era sounds a little conservative, but these are nonetheless effortlessly sophisticated collections. His eponymous first album's recordings are unadorned, but *Summertime (Part 2)* is typically, expansively expressive, and though its rock 'n' roll roots still show in *Mary, Mary Lou*, 1958's *Encore* "ac-cent-tchu-ates" brass arrangements on songs like *Ac-cent-tchu-ate The Positive*. 1959's singles comp *Hit Kit* also reminds us of *Only Sixteen*'s and *You Were Made For Me*'s impossible innocence, while another classy *Summertime* interpretation graces 1960's *The Wonderful World Of…*, though it's of course eclipsed by his own, defining title track. Almost universally, however, Cooke's interpretations of other people's songs – notably 1959's homage to Billie Holliday, *Tribute To The Lady* – are as exquisite as his own, yet the biggest draw remains his wonderfully youthful voice. It's like honey dripping off a silver spoon. *Wyndham Wallace*

8

WILLIAM CLAXTON © ABKCO MUSIC & RECORDS, INC

Various Artists
COME ON UP TO THE HOUSE: WOMEN SING WAITS
DUALTONE

The heartbreaking nature of Tom Waits' celebrated songwriting is sympathetically exposed over 12 new interpretations by an all-female cast. Produced by Warren Zanes, the collection is dominated by five versions of favourites from Waits' 12th studio album *Mule Variations* (1999). Throughout *Hold On* (Aimee Mann), *Georgia Lee* (Phoebe Bridgers), *Take It With Me* (Angie McMahon), *House Where Nobody Lives* (Iris Dement) and album opener *Come On Up To The House* (Joseph), Waits' gravelly gruffness gives way to a sensitive sweetness that will no doubt have you wiping away a wistful tear. Even those of you with a heart of calloused stone will begin to wobble by the time Shelby Lynne and Allison Moorer's lush *Ol' 55* sets in… and if that doesn't break you, then The Wild Reeds' *Tom Traubert's Blues* surely will. *Dan Biggane*

8

Patti Smith
HORSES
SONY (ROUGH TRADE EXCLUSIVE)

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE

In 2015, Patti Smith appeared on Glastonbury's Pyramid Stage with the Dalai Lama on the Tibetan leader's 80th birthday, as Michael Eavis, another octogenarian, looked on. It was hard to know which of these three champions of the marginalised had been the bigger influence on youth culture. Such is Smith's lasting allure. Her singularity was evident within seconds of needle hitting groove on this visionary 1975 debut, a blistering opening salvo for new wave; from the careering tilt through opener *Gloria*, Smith's freewheeling beat-poet delivery tussling with Lenny Kaye's insistent scratchy guitar, all the while John Cale's unfussy production keeping out of the way. We know all of that. The only question hanging over this Rough Trade exclusive, limited to 1,000 copies on pleasingly heavyweight clear vinyl, is who doesn't already have a copy? *Gary Walker*

9

SOUNDTRACKS

Daniel Lopatin
UNCUT GEMS
WARP

The Safdie brothers make helter-skelter thrillers so tense that nail-biters are down to bare bone by the end of the pair's stress-inducing rampages. For their 2017 film, *Good Time*, Daniel Lopatin, aka Oneohtrix Point Never, discombobulated viewers to the very edge of their seats with a broiling, dystopian synthscape that pulled the high-strung tension still tauter – and his score for the brothers' latest, *Uncut Gems*, is similarly nerve-racking. But with Adam Sandler's gambling-addicted Howard Ratner involved in a high-stakes game, there's an oddly playful mood this time around as the lilting sounds of Japanese ambient, fourth world percussion and Fisher Price opera cut through the ominous synths and techno-plated John Carpenter-isms. *Chris Parkin*

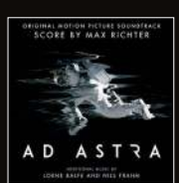
8

Mark Jenkin
BAIT
INVADA RECORDS

Proving there's more to Cornwall than *Doc 'Bloody' Martin* and *Poldark*, the remarkable DIY indie movie *Bait*, released in cinemas last year, exceeded all expections to surf on a surprise wave of success, achieving an unexpectedly large mainstream audience in the process. Not content with writing and directing the project, filmmaker Mark Jenkin demonstrated his budding credentials as a full-blown polymath by composing the score as well. Now picked up by Bristol's ever-wonderful Invada Records, his atmospheric drone-heavy soundtrack music is as immersively bleak and relentlessly rugged as you'd expect of a movie set out of season in an unnamed Cornish fishing village. As is only appropriate, the disc has been pressed on heavyweight Ocean Blue vinyl. *Gary Tipp*

8

Max Richter
AD ASTRA
DEUTSCHE GRAMOPHONE



Max Richter has worked with Roni Size and Vashti Bunyan, performed minimalist masterpieces by Eno, Glass and Reich as Piano Circus, and in 2017 he won acclaim for an eight-and-a-half-hour album enabling better sleep. But it's for his TV and film scores that Richter is best known. *Leftovers*, *White Boy Rick*, *Arrival* – he was involved in them all, paving the way for the likes of Jóhann Jóhannsson and Nils Frahm, who provides a bonus track to Richter's score for James Gray's existential sci-fi film, *Ad Astra*. Two years in the making, this is an emotional epic that incorporates real sounds broadcast from the Voyager probes to soundtrack Brad Pitt's journey to the extremes of the solar system. *Chris Parkin*

7

Various Artists
KILLING EVE
SEASONS 1 AND 2 OSTS
HEAVENLY

The heightened aesthetic of *Killing Eve* made it one of the most stylish dramas the BBC has ever created. Overseen by David Holmes and veteran music supervisor Catherine Grieves, the girl group noir soundtrack was absolutely integral to the drama's psychotic world. Largely by Holmes' trio Unloved, obscurities by the oddly menacing Poppy Family, a sleazy anomaly from The Troggs and Jane Weaver's delicious *Modern Kosmology* work fantastically well on screen and off. A few of the tunes work less well and appear simply kitsch without the visual support of Jodie Comer and Sandra Oh's grandstanding performances. *John Earls*

7

Wire

MIND HIVE
PINK FLAG

A mere 17 studio albums in and the literate post-punk outfit still brim with passion, vitality and aggression. **Wyndham Wallace** finds the band in a deceptively poppy mood

How long can a band stay angry? In Wire's case, it's been a while – over four decades, in fact – though age has undoubtedly mellowed them a little, and they might argue anyway that their literate post-punk sound was always too disciplined to be simply irate. The years have inevitably altered their line-up a little, too, though less than many acts of such vintage: it's indicative of their unfading confidence that Colin Newman, Graham Lewis and Robert Gotobed think nothing of the fact that the only change to their original incarnation, guitarist Matthew Simms, who first played with them in 2010, emphasises their veteran status by being half their age. He's definitely not there because the band lack energy.

This passion, control, confidence and vitality are all central to *Hung*, the ominous centrepiece to Wire's 17th studio album. The song's growing tension remains largely unresolved, its staccato drums, nagging bassline and growling guitars refusing to reach the climax the eight minutes threaten throughout. It isn't by any means the only malevolence on show here, either. Opener *Be Like Them* gets under way with what sounds like a bouzouki riff punctuated by precisely hammered drums and fierce guitar chords, while Newman's monotone, spiteful vocals – he spits lines such as "Rabid dogs/ Tearing skeletons into piles of bones" with deliberate aggression – soon sound like he's cornered his audience in a dingy pub, where he's poking them in the chest.

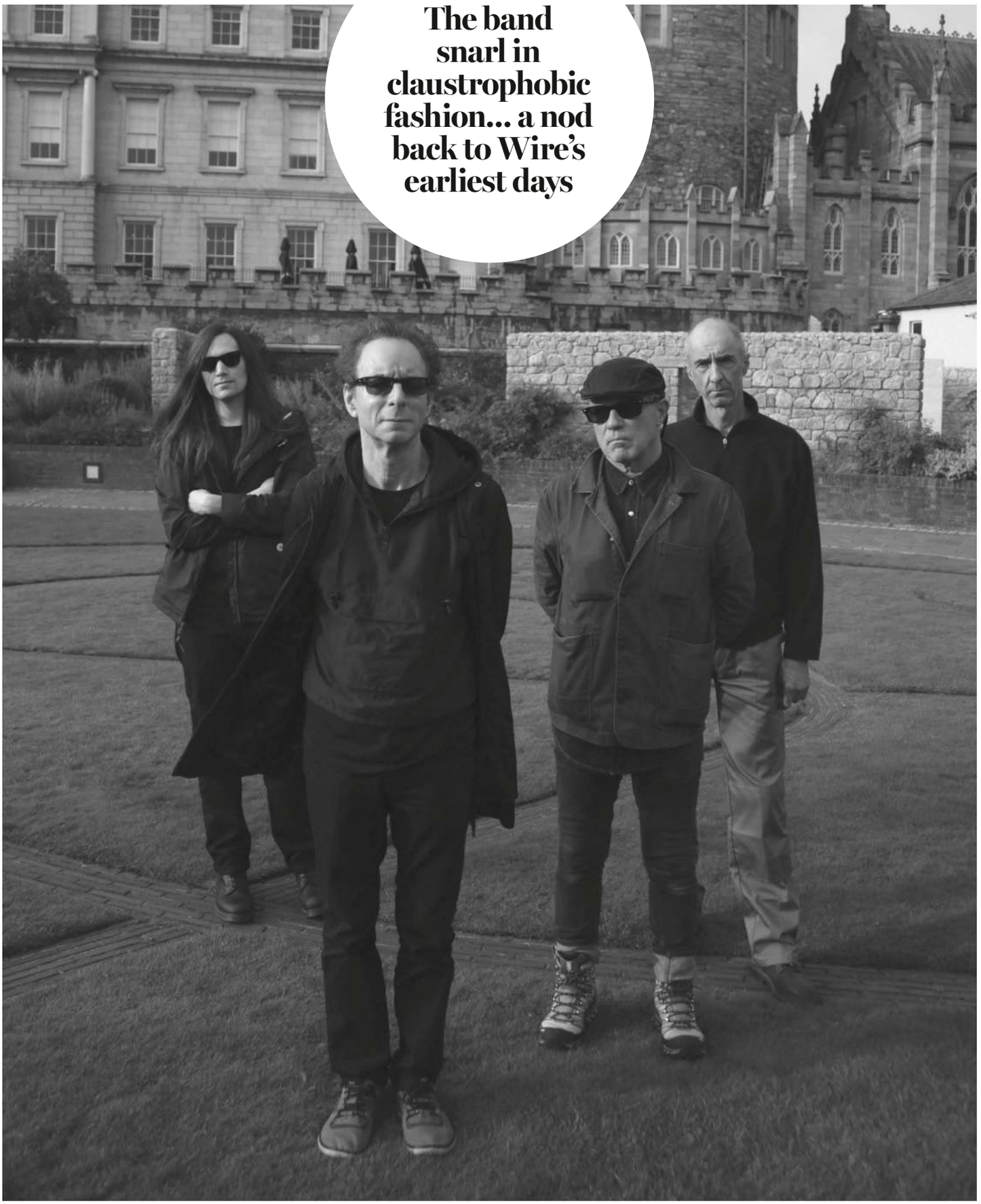
Primed And Ready adopts a similarly straightforward musical approach, though its muddy guitar riffs are, perhaps, a little more unwieldy, and *Oklahoma* finds Lewis snarling in similarly claustrophobic fashion over a landscape of early Public Image Ltd guitars and bass, its brevity a nod back to Wire's earliest days. Admittedly, his enigmatic revelation that "I admired your sexy hearse/ You knew I was dying" – in what otherwise appears to be a love song (of sorts) – suggests he may have indulged in more than drink, but it also adds to the sense of bewildering, muddled dread that shrouds the track.

Elsewhere, however, *Mind Hive* finds Wire in an unusually, albeit generally deceptively, poppy mood. *Cactused* is airy and melodious, its playful, tongue-twisting texts confirming Newman's love of language is perpetually healthy, and the brief *Off The Beach*'s arrangement, with acoustic guitars and added saxophone, is surprisingly jangly for a song that concludes with details of modern life: "People sleeping, broken, beaten/ People lying, homeless, dying" – at its bleakest.

Meanwhile, though, *Unrepentant*, with its synths swirling in the background, probably represents the first time Wire can be described as dreamy; *Shadows* underlines how, even when they're subdued, they can still make us feel uneasy. That's true, too, of the closing, contemplative *Humming*, which appears to confirm that everyone needs to put their feet up from time to time, but is actually far from complacent. Instead, it's an epitaph for democracy itself, its chorus a loaded criticism of our own inertia: "I can't quite remember/ When it went wrong/ Someone was humming/ A popular song". They may be older now, but Wire's anger is still invigorating.

TRACKLIST

1 Be Like Them
2 Cactused
3 Primed And Ready
4 Off The Beach
5 Unrepentant
6 Shadows
7 Oklahoma
8 Hung
9 Humming



The band snarl in claustrophobic fashion… a nod back to Wire's earliest days

FERGUS KELLY

Pet Shop Boys

HOTSPOT

X2/KOBALT

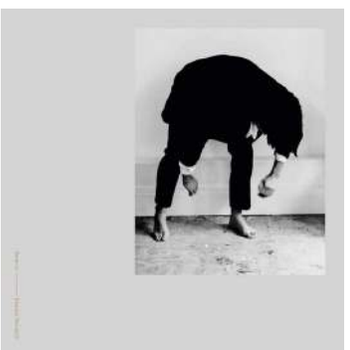
After full-on club albums *Electric* and *Super*, Pet Shop Boys had implied their third record with producer Stuart Price would comprise the ballads they'd been holding back. Previous melancholic LPs *Release* and *Elysium* are generally regarded as Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe's weakest. Probably unfairly – there's a grandeur to both, but the Pets' stock seemed set to fall when middling ballad *Burning The Heather* was released on the day *Hotspot* was announced. It's also worrying Tennant and Lowe are doing a Greatest Hits tour in spring, without bothering to tour *Hotspot* first. Thankfully, *Hotspot* turns out to essentially comprise the pop songs they've worked on with Price, with much intrigue among the 6:4 bangers/ballads ratio. *Dreamland*, an up-for-it collaboration with Years & Years, is the first hint Tennant and Lowe are trying something new. *Monkey Business* is incredible – not only PSB's best tune since 1993's *Can You Forgive Her?*, but their first all-out funk workout and the first time since 1996 B-side *The Truck Driver And His Mate* they've done all-out filth. It's downright bizarre *Monkey Business* wasn't the album's first single. *I Don't Wanna* and *Happy People*, from Pet Shop Boys' catalogue of Odes To Clubbing, are almost as euphoric. In this context, the ballads work as moments of calm, with *Hoping For A Miracle* an elegant cousin of fan favourite *Your Funny Uncle*. It all ends with *Wedding In Berlin*, a slice of prime Chris Lowe giddiness, wherein Lowe eventually mucks about with *The Wedding March*. *Hotspot* is one of the downright oddest albums Pet Shop Boys have ever made, and all the better for it. ***John Earls***

8

Keeley Forsyth

DEBRIS

THE LEAF LABEL



The word about Oldham-based actor/musician Keeley Forsyth is spreading. Already a busy TV and film actor (readers may recognise her from appearances in *Coronation Street*, *Luther* and even *Guardians Of The Galaxy*) she also writes and sings music. But there, the comparisons with Tracey Ullman or Alexander Armstrong end. As an actor, she's blessed with a face that can portray torment, suffering and anxiety – a heroin-addicted single mum in *The Casual Vacancy*; a mother with a spiritually confused son in *The Devil Outside*. It's a face for our times and, whether by accident or design, it so happens that it matches exactly the disquieting music she makes with her otherworldly, haunted voice: think Karen Dalton, Nico or Anohni. Title track *Debris* was released late last year with a video directed by Maxine Peake, a pairing which immediately fits. The stark musical settings are made up of acoustic guitar, slowly-bowed cello and viola, occasional electronica and room ambience straight from Talk Talk. They're a perfect setting for Forsyth's voice and her collaboration with Leaf labelmate Matthew Bourne is a real revelation. She describes the songs as "blocks of metal that drop from the sky", not something you can imagine, say, Harry Styles saying and the venture could have slipped into pompous navel gazing. That it absolutely does not is down in part to the tasteful production by Sam Hobbs, who saves the whole venture from slipping into bathos. Final track *Start Again* introduces electronica and possibly signals where this strange and unsettling project could go next. *Ben Wardle*

8

Courteeners
MORE. AGAIN. FOREVER.
IGNITION

Having scrapped an album's worth of songs, one of the last indie stadium bands standing plainly made the right decision. Album six sees them relaxed and starting to muck about again, back to the spirit of newcomers across 10 tight, taut tunes. The title track is like Simon Armitage covering Blondie's *Rapture*. *Heart Attack* is a perfect pop song about writing the perfect pop song. Even the requisite stadium ballads *Is Heaven Even Worth It?* and *One Day At A Time* have a lightness of touch hardly ever found in songs this size. Courteeners always had more going on in their tunes and Liam Fray's empathetic lyrics than the unforunate "Dark Fruits lads" cliché unfairly attached to them implies. Anyone still throwing that at Courteeners after *More. Again. Forever.* is a certified chump. Each of its 10 songs is a potential single – what more do you need? ***John Earls*** **9**

Nada Surf
NEVER NOT TOGETHER
CITY SLANG

Don't let the fact that this is New York four-piece Nada Surf's ninth album and you're still only vaguely aware of them dissuade you. It's now 17 years since their Heavenly Recordings classic *Let Go* came out, which contains the definitive Nada Surf song *Inside Of Love*. This, like most of frontman Matthew Caws' tunes, throws a chorus at you so natural and perfectly formed that it seems incomprehensible that it hasn't already been claimed. This formula of fragile, self-confessional vocals, chiming guitars, punchy drums and soaring harmonies has only been honed, never changed. Recorded at Rockfield and boasting a Bon Iver-inspired theme of interconnectedness, *Never Not Together* is a nine-track wonder and fans of Big Star, Jellyfish, Semisonic, Teenage Fanclub, or intelligent guitar pop of any kind should rejoice. *Ben Wardle* **9**

Isobel Campbell
THERE IS NO OTHER
COOKING VINYL

At some point in the wake of *Hawk* (2010), her third album recorded with Mark Lanegan, former Belle And Sebastian member Isobel Campbell disappeared from view. As to why, it's a story that mixes up the professional (record company hassles) with the personal (a move Stateside from Scotland with her husband, studio engineer Chris Szczech). All of which makes the coherence of *There Is No Other*, her first solo LP since *Milkwhite Sheets* in 2006, remarkable in itself. Especially as it's a dreamy, even wispy album with roots in folk and psychedelia, as lead single *Ant Life* shows, yet which also exhibits the sheen of a record aimed at the mainstream without going awry, as evidenced by the US radio-friendly chug of Tom Petty cover *Runnin' Down A Dream*. An assured comeback that surely suggests better days ahead for the talented Campbell. ***Jonathan Wright*** **8**

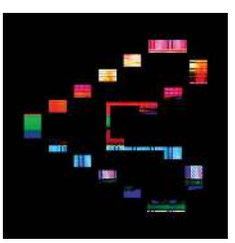
Bill Fay
COUNTLESS BRANCHES
DEAD OCEANS

The late re-blossoming of Bill Fay is a truly marvellous thing. Here is a songwriter whose 1970s albums for the Deram label were deleted for 25 years before being reissued, and then discovered by the likes of Jim O'Rourke and Wilco's Jeff Tweedy. Cue the second act of Fay's career, which began with the release of *Life Is People* in 2012. It revealed a man not trading on the past, but crafting songs that dealt with spirituality, nature and the need for connection. *Countless Branches* covers the same subjects, but within more stripped-back musical settings – piano, acoustic guitar and Fay's own vocals are to the fore – than the sometimes lush textures of its 2015 predecessor, *Who Is The Sender?* A collection that marvels at the wonder of it all and invites you to do the same – which you should. *Jonathan Wright* **8**

Bombay Bicycle Club
EVERYTHING ELSE HAS GONE WRONG
MMM... RECORDS

The narrative surrounding this album is typical of bands who have remained together for over a decade: they take an extended break, pursue individual solo projects, have some time apart and then come back all 'rejuvenated' and release a new album. While it's pretty much business as usual for the band here – a blend of indie rock, pop and lashings of shimmering electronica – Bombay Bicycle Club do have a seamless knack for squeezing out a nice melody. The title track especially feels like growth and evolution, as it rises nicely over the lines "Yes, I've found my second wind/ Yes, I've found my hope again". There's even a nod to krautrockers Neu! on the groove-heavy *Is It Real?* And the album generally has a genuine richness and warmth that emanates from the production. It'll no doubt be considered their maturity record. ***Daniel Dylan Wray*** **7**

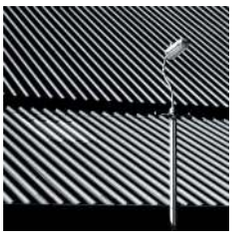
Squarepusher
BE UP A HELLO
WARP



Since his breakthrough in the mid 1990s, Squarepusher's Tom Jenkinson has barely been out of the recording studio. The constantly prolific electronic artist has managed to blast through as many albums as he has genres; hurtling through IDM, glitch, electronica, techno and anything else he fancies having a go at. His latest album feels pretty much emblematic of this approach, as it doesn't so much play out as *Be Up A Hello* does rocket into hyperspace and never stop. This album is unrelenting, barely stopping for breath over ceaseless layers of twitchy beats and squelchy slabs of electronics that take on the feel of a video game produced by someone simultaneously mainlining speed. It's also loads of fun and feels as if it's been made by someone who still has the future firmly set in his sights. *Daniel Dylan Wray* **7**

Craven Faults
ERRATICS & UNCONFORMITIES
THE LEAF LABEL

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE



On the heels of three compelling and increasingly collectable EPs, the mesmerising debut from mystery producer Craven Faults continues on the same sonic path as its predecessors, journeying through the post-industrial landscape of northern Britain via a vast wall of vintage modular synths; just imagine John Carpenter bumping into an early line-up of Tangerine Dream while out hiking on the West Yorkshire Moors. The rugged, undulating synthscapes of opener *Vacca Wall* and *Deipkier* are powerfully immersive works that have been assembled by a painstaking master of his craft. With some of the tracks created almost seven years ago, Craven Faults describes the process as recording and re-recording "to the correct level of imperfection". Let's be thankful such time was spent on *Erratics & Unconformities* to get things so wonderfully wrong. *Gary Tipp*

9

Stormzy
HEAVY IS THE HEAD
HASHTAG MERKY MUSIC/ ATLANTIC

"When Banksy put the vest on me, felt like God was testing me." The instantly iconic Union Jack stab vest that Michael Omari Jr. famously wore for his Glastonbury appearance last June reappears on the artwork for his much-awaited second album. Of course, it's an arch political statement, but it's also there to suggest that this album's 16 tracks will be like that show: edgy, provocative and as grime as any hardcore fan could hope for, but also packed with a pop sensibility. And Stormzy's vigorous drive and ego, along with producer FRED, have made sure that it is. Last summer's single and album closer *Vossi Bop* is arguably the best thing he's ever laid down on vinyl: aggressive, funny and infectious; Ed Sheeran co-write *Own It* is a two-step *Shape Of You* and *Lessons* once again proves he can sing. Own it. *Ben Wardle*

8

Gabrielle Aplin
DEAR HAPPY
NEVER FADE RECORDS

With its sweet-toothed production, which largely renounces *English Rain*'s polite folk and *Light Up The Dark*'s guitars for a more sterile, flamboyant electronic aesthetic, *Dear Happy* sometimes seems desperate to fit in with contemporary pop trends. True, opener *Until The Sun Comes Up* starts in refreshingly intimate fashion, but soon Aplin's overwhelmed by over-complicated digital edits, and similarly restless tricks disturb *Like You Say You Do*, though its drabness invites diversion. When the songs take the strain, though, things run more smoothly. Piano-led *One Of Those Days* spins its silken melody classily, its climax brief enough to leave one wanting, while *My Mistake*'s growing arrangement – with its empowering assertion ("If I falter/ Well at least it's my mistake") reflects the journey she's undertaken. *Wyndham Wallace*

6

...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of The Dead
X: THE GODLESS VOID AND OTHER STORIES
INSIDE OUT MUSIC

The Texas-based alt-rockers have now reached album number 10. While the band have had a penchant for blistering noise-rock over the years, there's an elegance and craft to some of the production here, especially from the opening, hugely cinematic and aptly titled *The Opening Crescendo*, that sees them trying to expand on their palate. Sure, there's plenty of crunchy noise, riotous riffs and soaring choruses, but there's also a considered understanding of space, pace and restraint. Given their longevity, and their occasional proclivity for big, first-pump choruses, ...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of The Dead feel almost rooted in the classic American rock canon. Albeit the noisiest member of the family. *Daniel Dylan Wray*

7

WHAT'S ON IN THE SHOP

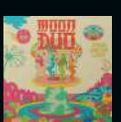
LOAFERS
HALIFAX

Stone Foundation
STREET RITUALS
100% RECORDS

This is a wonderful record, filled with so much soul. They're an eight-piece band who have worked closely with Paul Weller. With hints of Curtis Mayfield, Style Council and Marvin Gaye, it's an album built on love, passion and hope for a better world. The band headlined our Christmas gig in December and brought the house down. This album has been the soundtrack to Loafers for the last two years.

The War On Drugs
A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING
ATLANTIC

Another favourite record in Loafers. The guitar, harmonies and lyrics on this album are sublime, with hints of Neil Young, Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan. It's a gorgeous rock album that can be enjoyed at any time of day, but the dream would be to drive across America with this album on repeat.



Moon Duo
STARS ARE THE LIGHT
SACRED BONES

This is a dreamy psych-folk pop album with some beautiful soundscapes and vocals. It sounds wonderful on vinyl on a Sunday morning with a fresh-ground coffee. The perfect record to ease us into a busy day in Loafers.

Torres
SILVER TONGUE
MERGE

The solo project of Mackenzie Scott has developed a great deal in recent years. What started out as another promising indie singer-songwriter pseudonymous vehicle, quickly blossomed into something that grew in depth, potency and texture as she began to explore more electronic and pop grooves, while also touching upon the occasional slice of gothic rock. Here, the ever-talented Scott touches loosely upon all the previous guises she has taken on. Yet, rather than this being some kind of algorithmic mess that attempts to please all, the excellent *Silver Tongue* instead positions Scott as a deeply versatile songwriter who is as comfortable singing along with a glistening synth line or shimmering production, as she is over a screeching guitar part or acing a solo delivery. *Daniel Dylan Wray*

8

Bonny Light Horseman
BONNY LIGHT HORSEMAN
37D03D RECORDS

How do you make, for want of a better phrase, traditional music accessible? As the debut LP from Bonny Light Horseman proves, not getting too hung up on authenticity is key. Taking the deep-folk tradition of the British Isles as a starting point but merrily rewriting and reworking as they go, the trio – singer-songwriter Anaïs Mitchell (who recently won a Tony for the musical *Hadestown*), Fruit Bats mainman Eric D Johnson, and producer/multi-instrumentalist Josh Kaufman (Craig Finn, The National) – range across a musical landscape that's instantly familiar. Still, though, songs suddenly spin off in unexpected directions. When this works best, it's utterly magical, with a song such as *The Roving* conveying a deceptive looseness rooted as much in Americana as the British folk tradition and which, high praise indeed, also recalls The Band. *Jonathan Wright*

7

A Girl Called Eddy
BEEN AROUND
ELEFANT RECORDS

It's taken Erin Moran 14 years to follow up her Richard Hawley-produced debut, but such insouciance befits her laid back, if carefully orchestrated, sound. After all, it requires effort to combine Karen Carpenter and Todd Rundgren. Her comeback's title track sets out her stall, its cheerful Carole King melody bathed in brass, its early 1970s production aesthetic worthy of the *Too Slow For Disco* compilation series, while *Charity Shop Window* provides a poignant remembrance of a former love with soft-rock guitars and soaring vocals. Not everything here belongs on a yacht, of course: *Someone's Gonna Break Your Heart*'s stomping beat underlines her Chrissie Hynde stylings. But, as she disappears once more, bonus track *Pale Blue Moon* leaves us with lingering Bacharach flavours. *Wyndham Wallace*

8

Andy Shauf
THE NEON SKYLINE
ANTI-

Despite its title, Torontonian Andy Shauf's world-weary last album, 2016's *The Party*, felt much like the work of Elliott Smith. His sixth is airier, but its nominal skyline is nonetheless a bar's counter, and it's around this that his song's characters circulate as if it were *Cheers*. Shauf's a phenomenal narrative songwriter – both his voice and stories often recall Paul Simon's – and here he tracks a night out, with snapshots of poignant, telling moments, as his ex returns to town. He leads with acoustic guitar, the opening title track upbeat but full of self-deception and the closing *Changer* reminiscent of his admirers, Wilco. There are inspired flashes of woodwind, too, on the contemplative *Where Are You Judy* and quietly resigned *Things I Do*, while both *Living Room*, with its peppy shuffle, and bouncy *Try Again* echo Gizmo Varillas' first album. *Wyndham Wallace*

8

OUR NEW ALBUM **WRANGLER**

"There was originally a little bit of irony in this track," says Stephen Mallinder of *How To Start A Revolution*, from the electronic trio's third, bleakest and most funky album. "But the world has become even scarier in the last two years." Mal predicted the AI surveillance state with his first band, Cabaret Voltaire. "I take no satisfaction at all in this stuff coming true," he says. "If it felt dystopian then, it feels more dystopian now. Wrangler are still questioning power but some of the tools of power have changed. I'm fearful of Google in the same way I was Thatcher."

Wrangler
A SITUATION
BELLA UNION

If you squint with your ears, you could be forgiven for thinking Wrangler's new album dates from the late 1980s or early 1990s, an overlooked gem from the Mute catalogue perhaps. That's largely because the trio – Benge (The Maths), Stephen Mallinder (Cabaret Voltaire) and Phil Winter (Tunng), who also trade as Creep Show when performing with John Grant – have a shared and enduring love of analogue synths and aged digital sequencers. Listen to third LP *A Situation*, though, and, from the moment scene-setter *Anthropocene* begins to express its very 21st-century concerns over the state of the planet, it's evidently clear this is a contemporary record. Yet for all it explores dystopian visions, *Situation* is also a playful dance record packed with belting tunes – and heaven knows we could do with the sense of fun this imbues right now. *Jonathan Wright*

8

Blossoms
FOOLISH LOVING SPACES
VIRGIN EMI

Other bands must really hate Blossoms. They seem to be endlessly on tour yet, every 18 months, another round of top-level pop promptly arrives, presumably written and recorded in their lunch break. The lads' old-fashioned, uncomplicated release schedule and making it all look so simple means it's easy to take them for granted. Don't. It's true, there are so many summer bangers here – *The Keeper, If You Think This Is Real Life, Romance, Eh?* – they might have sat on *Foolish Loving Spaces* for a few months before cashing in with sunshine airplay. But waiting around means Blossoms wouldn't get to be stupidly entertaining in concert, and nobody wants that. Maybe one day Blossoms will delay a new album as long as Guns N' Roses. Until then, here are 10 further reliable riots. There'll probably be more next year, but why miss out? *John Earls* **8**

Algiers
THERE IS NO YEAR
MATADOR

Algiers' previous album, *The Underside Of Power*, was a glorious slice of electronic industrial neo-soul that sounded like little else. On the opening track of the band's new album that familiar mix of big, swelling, church-like vocals, with industrial electronics feels like a continuation. However, as the album progresses the sound gets smoother and slicker, often slower, allowing piano lines to push forward the groove, sometimes favouring the slick over the discordant. The results are mixed. Lyrically and in terms of delivery, Franklin James Fisher is as arresting as ever, but the pace can feel stuck in a gear that it needs to get out of. It's clear the band are trying something new from the ferocious polemics of previous work, but there's something just not quite falling into place here. *Daniel Dylan Wray* **6**

Pinegrove
MARIGOLD
ROUGH TRADE

For some, it was a slightly surprising announcement that New Jersey indie outfit Pinegrove had signed to Rough Trade earlier this year. While the label have long had an eclectic roster, the addition of a band who straddle the lines between folk, country, emo, indie and alt-rock seemed an interesting 2019 acquisition. However, the decision makes a little more sense once you listen to the end results. Fourth album *Marigold* possesses a close similarity to The Decemberists, a band that have been attached to the label for a long time. It's all very slick, soft touch, highly emotive material that weaves seamlessly between straight-up Americana and sad-lad pop in its tone. While the record lyrically is clearly a reflection of the times we live in, musically it feels strangely out of sorts and content to tread familiar ground. *Daniel Dylan Wray* **6**

ALA.NI
ACCA
A+LSO

Paris-based UK soul singer ALA.NI's 2016 debut *You & I* was praised in all the right places. With a voice blending Billie Holiday and Sarah Vaughan with a haunting touch of Beth Gibbons thrown in, it's hardly surprising that artists including Davids Lynch and Byrne, Jean-Baptiste Mondino and Iggy Pop all fell under her spell. Much like its predecessor, *ACCA* was written entirely a cappella, but this time around, ALA.NI has added a whole orchestra of beats, harmonies and instruments built entirely out of her voice and, occasionally, body. The songs now have a contemporary urgency and groove, which make ACCA more durable than she sounded on her debut: think Phil Spector backing Laurie Anderson; yes, that bonkers. The icing on the cake is the Iggster lending his gruff baritone to the wonderful *Le Diplomate*. *Ben Wardle* **8**

Alice Boman
DREAM ON
PIAS

Almost seven years after Alice Boman recorded her first demos, the Malmö resident finally releases her debut, an all-too-brief collection of 10 songs that sound like the *Twin Peaks* soundtrack recorded in the Swedish mountains. The sustained keyboards, jazzy percussion and Boman's feathery voice on *Hold On* will take you back to Julee Cruise's *Falling*, and *The More I Cry* will transport you to a booth in the Roadhouse. *Everybody Hurts*, meanwhile – with crystalline guitars and celestial Liz Fraser-esque vocals – has nothing to do with the over-familiar R.E.M. song and everything to do with Cocteau Twins' magic, while *Wish We Had More Time* is simply heartbreak distilled. By the time you reach the exquisitely fragile *Mississippi*, you'll be wondering how this can have been produced by fellow Swede Patrik Berger, who's also worked with Robyn and Charli XCX. *Wyndham Wallace* **8**

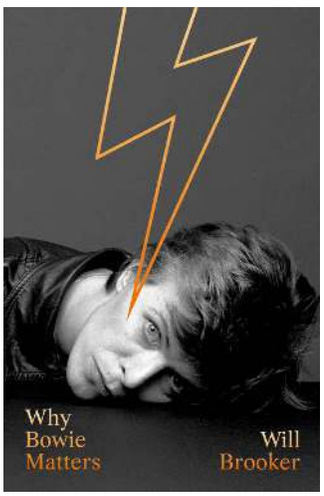
Lee 'Scratch' Perry
HEAVY RAIN
ON-U SOUND

Following the grand tradition of the dub companion LP, *Heavy Rain* is Lee 'Scratch' Perry's bass-enhanced version of 2019's late-career high *Rainford*. Ably assisted by British dubfather Adrian Sherwood, the groovy octogenarian has summoned up a sensational swansong of a sequel, every bit as appealing as its much-praised original source. Veteran trombonist Vin Gordon sits in on three tracks, including the delay-heavy *Crickets In Moonlight*, while none other than the righteous Brian Eno contributes to the sonically reimagined version of *Makumba Rock*, now going by the name of *Here Come The Warm Dreads*. The mighty Upsetter might not be manipulating every slider on the production desk these days, he's 83, but his grasp of quality control is still strong, as the joyous *Heavy Rain* bears witness. *Gary Tipp* **8**

Why Bowie Matters

WILL BROOKER

WILLIAM COLLINS £12.99



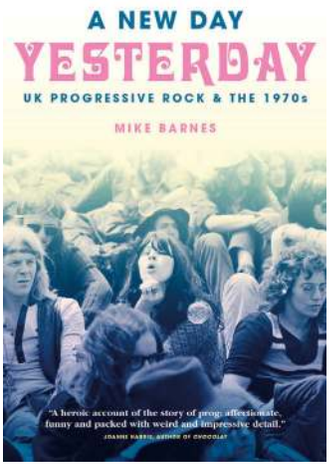
Die-hard Bowie fans are always likely to be able to recount their 'lightning bolt' moment, the time they were first struck by the great man's music. For *Why Bowie Matters* author Will Brooker it was an unlikely one, as the initial track that resonated with him deeply was *Ricochet* from *Let's Dance*. In his new book, Brooker explores Bowie's legacy as a cultural icon from a couple of perspectives. Firstly, as an academic (he's Professor of film and cultural studies at Kingston University) and, secondly, as a lifelong Bowie obsessive. After all, this is the man who lived his life as The Dame for a year as part of an immersive research project that saw him not only trace Bowie's footsteps (London, Berlin, New York), but also listen only to the music and read the books that he (Bowie) loved. He dyed his hair bright orange, too. This lunatic undertaking, sorry, immersive research project, certainly gives Brooker a different viewpoint, but it's not one that he is able to take full advantage of throughout the book's entertaining yet not wholly illuminating discourse. *Gary Tipp*

6

A New Day Yesterday

MIKE BARNES

OMNIBUS PRESS £20



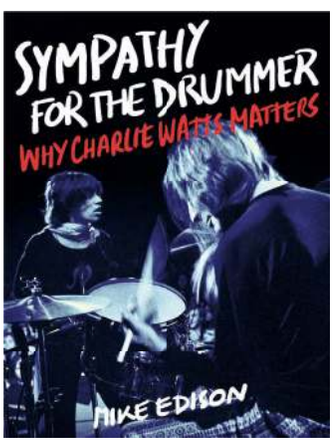
Author Mike Barnes' vivid chronicle of prog rock in the late 60s and 70s is suitably epic and grandiose in both its scope and ambition. If *A New Day Yesterday* was an album, it would surely be a triple gatefold. The publishers just may have missed a trick by not commissioning Hipgnosis to design the cover. The phrase 'progressive rock', Barnes notes, was coined in 1967 by *Melody Maker's* Chris Welch, and that is more or less when the journey begins with the creative outpouring of the psychedelic underground. From there, via a series of interviews with musicians and industry insiders we are skilfully navigated through the entire history of the movement. From Camel to Caravan, from ELP to The Enid, from Hatfield And The North to Henry Cow, the usual suspects are all in here. But the book, unlike this review, is not simply a list of bands and the author most be commended for his astute handling of such a wide-ranging genre. Most startlingly, Barnes reveals that progressive rock wasn't all about wizards after all. Who knew? *GT*

9

Sympathy For The Drummer

MIKE EDISON

BACKBEAT BOOKS £20



The 'Why [insert musician's name here] Matters' book concept is gathering a head of steam, and this time it's the turn of the Stones' venerable drummer, Charlie Watts. His mate Keith has repeatedly declared, "No Charlie, No Stones" and author Mike Edison, also a drummer, has taken it upon himself to back up that claim. For five decades, Charlie has had the best seat in the house watching Mick shake his skinny arse, but his public persona, what exists of one, rails against the grain of typical rockstar behaviour. Just what was an urbane jazz sticksman with a sharp dress code and an intense dislike of the limelight doing behind the drums at Altamont as an essential part of the greatest rock 'n' roll band in the world? And it's largely that unlikely juxtaposition which keeps the ebulient Edison occupied throughout the course of this undeniably entertaining yet slightly fluffy book. While the 'Why… Matters' subtitle might suggest itself to some degree of cultural study having been applied, in truth, *Sympathy For The Drummer* is anything but. What's more it's probably way better off without it. *GT*

7

Classic Albums By Women

CLASSIC ALBUM SUNDAYS

ACC ART BOOKS £15

This well-designed tome was initially inspired by #AlbumsByWomen, a social media campaign initiated by Classic Album Sundays in support of International Women's Day in 2018. At the outset, collaborators were encouraged to submit a photo and a mini-critique of, yep, you guessed it, their favourite classic album involving a woman. The response was positive, and so the social media campaign eventually morphed into this compelling publication. Now featuring over 100 contributions from musicians and music biz luminaries, *Classic Albums By Women* not only acts as an overdue celebration of female creativity and musicianship, but also as a well-informed reference source for vinyl collectors in search of some considered picks. High-profile contributors include Pink Floyd's Nick Mason (*Ladies Of The Canyon*, Joni Mitchell), John Grant (*NunSexMonkRock*, Nina Hagen) and Peter Hook (*Chelsea Girl*, Nico), while other selected gems to hunt down include Meredith Monk's *Dolmen Music* and Alice Clark's soulful debut. It's what your coffee table was made for. *GT*

7

DREAM MACHINES

Wilson Audio

SASHA DAW

£39,998 (STANDARD COLOURS) OR £41,998 (PREMIUM COLOURS)

absolutesounds.com

You'll need to pay a pretty penny for the world's most accomplished loudspeakers

The Sasha DAW is hand-built in Utah, USA and finished in Wilson Audio's automotive-class paint facility. The speakers trace their lineage back to the legendary WATT/Puppy – the best-selling loudspeaker above $10,000 in the history of audio. Oh and 'DAW'? It stands for 'David Andrew Wilson', Wilson Audio's founder, who passed away earlier this year.

The speakers use enclosures built from Wilson Audio's proprietary, ultra-vibration-resistant 'X-material' and 'S-material' composites while the adjustable module alignment enables precise time domain regulation for optimum accuracy and coherence.

All of this adds up to amazing levels of sonic detail, dynamic range, transient speed and soundstage focus.

1 MODULAR
The modular design incorporates separate upper (midrange/treble) and lower (bass) enclosures

2 CHRONOSONIC
The upper enclosure features the same 17.8cm midrange driver and 2.54cm tweeter as are featured in the £700,000-per-pair WAMM Master Chronosonic loudspeaker

3 BASS DRIVERS
The lower enclosure sports two redesigned 20.3cm bass drivers

1
2
3

The X1 is available in three finishes; a premium walnut wood veneer, black or white

Pro-Ject X1

TURNTABLE

£699 www.henleyaudio.co.uk

Jason Kennedy extols the virtues of a refreshingly engaging turntable from Pro-Ject's growing range

The X1 is the latest addition to Pro-Ject's burgeoning range of turntables; the company appear intent on covering all price points below the excessive in an attempt to corner the market, and they are doing well. The X1 is a bit different to the majority of the company's models by virtue of having the motor underneath the platter, with a belt driving a sub-platter rather than the platter itself.

This is an approach Rega and others have long preferred, as it reduces the influence that irregularities in the drive system have on the speed of the turntable. By employing a platter with a bit of mass around the outside edge, it uses inertia to maintain an even speed rather than relying on the motor and its electronics.

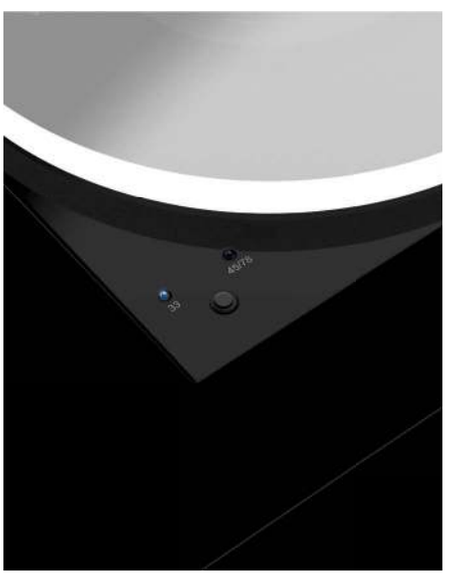
The plinth or main body of the X1 is a substantial piece of beautifully finished MDF with a well carved out to make space for the sub-platter and motor. This allows the platter to sit close to the top of the deck. The motor itself is decoupled from the woodwork with rubber mountings in an effort to keep its vibrations out of the plinth, and drives the platter with a relatively short, flat belt. There are two pulleys on the motor, but the larger one is for playing 78rpm shellac rather than vinyl discs, should you have any of those. The platter itself is made of acrylic and is designed to be used without a mat, although one is supplied.

The main bearing consists of a stainless steel shaft with bronze bushings and Teflon at the weight bearing point, which should be sufficient for the 2kg platter. Speed switching is done electronically via a single switch, the main on/off switch is underneath the plinth and helps keep the X1 looking clean. The tonearm is a chunky affair with a carbon/aluminium shaft, a damped counterweight and Pro-Ject's preferred thread and weight anti-skate system. The latter are a little fiddly to fit but work well once set up. The cartridge fitted to the X1 is an Ortofon 2M Silver badged as a Pro-Ject Pick It, which is a silver coiled version of the popular 2M Red. Setup is a case of putting on the counterweight and adjusting it until downforce hits 1.8g, for which some form of gauge or the services of a dealer is necessary.

Often, Pro-Ject turntables are impressively refined sounding for the money, but lacking in the musical engagement stakes. The X1 is rather different: it has a good sense of timing and makes for compelling listening. I preferred the sound with the felt mat on top of the acrylic platter, the mat allowing for better timing, improved dynamics and more fine detail; the quiet notes are easier to appreciate. The output level of the Pick It cartridge is a bit lower than average for a moving magnet, but that doesn't stop this record player from kicking out some chewy bass saxophone and distinctly defined tabla on a Sarathy Korwar track.

THE SOUND IS MORE ENERGETIC THAN REFINED, BUT IT DOES DELIVER THE EXCITEMENT OF A WELL RECORDED PERFORMANCE…

The X1 is good at separating out the various instruments and voices in a recording where there are several of them present. This makes it easier to enjoy the music as a whole and allows you to focus on a specific person's contribution to the mix. The sound is more energetic than refined, but it does deliver the excitement of a well recorded performance in an intelligible and powerful manner.



Esperanza Spalding's *Ebony And Ivy* has plenty of power in the bass and attack from the drums, the combination with her scathing lyrics making for a kick-ass sound.

The X1 is the most enjoyable Pro-Ject turntable I've reviewed. It makes the music interesting and engaging thanks to a good sense of timing and strong bass. There are more subtle turntables available at the price, but not many that deliver the joy of vinyl so effectively. I like the fact you can upgrade the connecting cable easily and appreciate the inclusion of a dust cover. Add to this the deep gloss finish and luxury of electronic speed change and you have an appealing addition to the market's midrange options.

This is a refreshingly engaging and musically compelling design from Pro-Ject, with a high-quality gloss finish and decent tonearm. **8**

VERDICT

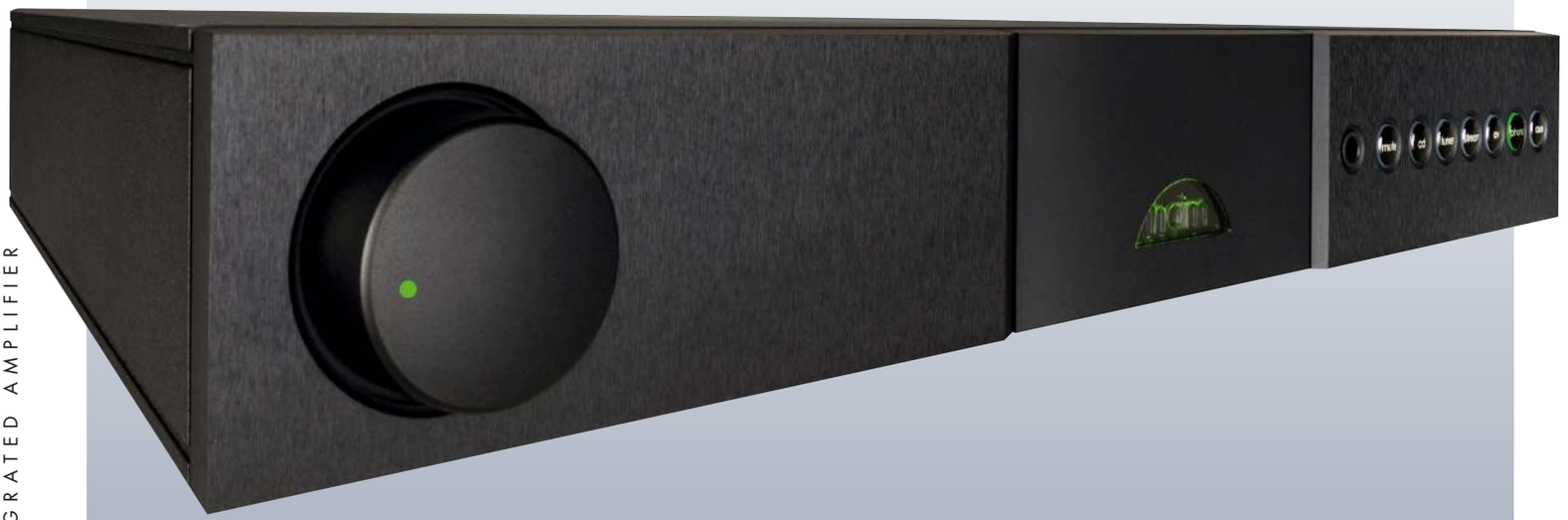
PROS	CONS
GOOD TIMING	LOW-OUTPUT CARTRIDGE
VERY NICE FINISH	NOISY MOTOR
UPGRADEABLE INTERCONNECT CABLE	FINGERLIFT IS SMALL AND SLIPPERY

Alternatives

Rega P3
£649
The turntable to beat at this price point, the P3 with Elys2 cartridge is both sophisticated and fabulously musical, build quality is very high and there are few that can match its sound. It doesn't have the X1's electronic speed switching, however.

Technics SL-1500C
£899
The most affordable Technics SL series direct drive turntable has luxuries such as a built-in phono stage, end-of-side auto-lift and electronic speed control, but it's not quite as subtle and revealing as the best at this price.

Thorens TD402
£749
The recently reborn Thorens brand used to be a big player and this direct drive turntable with its carbon fibre arm, Audio-Technica cartridge and onboard phono stage looks like a potential contender in this hard-fought sector.



The new built-in phono stage makes the NAIT XS 3 the perfect partner for turntables

Naim NAIT XS 3

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

LONG LIVE VINYL EDITOR'S CHOICE

£2,199 naimaudio.com

Naim's iconic amp has undergone some major performance upgrades. **John Pickford** takes notice

The Naim NAIT integrated amplifier is a true heritage product. Originally launched in 1983, the NAIT range has gone through many revisions and is now available as three different models. Entry model the NAIT 5si is line level only, so doesn't bother us, while the 80w-rated SUPERNAIT 3 is top of the range. In the middle, in what might be thought of as the Goldilocks position, is the model on test here, the NAIT XS 3. With a power output of 70w, the XS 3 shares many of the features with the top model, including a Moving Magnet (MM) phono stage.

The original 1980s NAIT is now considered a classic, and there are still a few misty-eyed aficionados out there who believe that none of the revisions have bettered it. While the early models were half the size width-wise, the more conventional style of the current NAIT range emerged at the turn of the millennium. Some cunning enthusiasts like to point out that the similar styling throughout the product range allows users to clandestinely upgrade without the other half finding out.

It's six years since the last NAITs were released, during which time Naim has upgraded the power amplifier sections and, most importantly, added an onboard phono stage. The phono circuit operates in three stages; the initial gain stage, passive equalisation and finally gain with active RIAA equalisation. The RIAA EQ makes use of special 'through hole' mounted film capacitors, designed to minimise microphonic pickup and maximise transient response.

NAIM HAS UPGRADED THE POWER AMPLIFIER SECTIONS AND ADDED AN ONBOARD PHONO STAGE

Besides the all-important phono input, the XS 3 features five inputs to accommodate streamers, CD players and any other line-level devices. These inputs are accessible via rear-panel RCA or DIN connectors. Naim recommend their preferred DIN connectors where possible, however the phono input is exclusively RCA to make it compatible with any good quality turntable.

In keeping with Naim's iconic styling, the XS 3's front panel hosts a single, high-quality Alps Blue Velvet rotary control for volume adjustment. Joining the six input selection buttons are a similar button to mute the amp's output and a 6.3mm (1/4") jack input for headphones. While the NAITs are traditional Class A/B designs, the headphone amp operates in pure Class A; connecting headphones automatically mutes the amp's output to loudspeakers.

Volume level, including muting, is also controllable with the supplied remote control, which additionally provides a number of useful features, including switching off the unit's front-panel display lighting.

The NAIT arrives just as I am about to undertake a major refit of my listening room. This is a timely appearance, as Naim gear is notorious for needing a lengthy running-in period and this one is factory-fresh. With the room cleared of equipment, I set up a makeshift system in an adjacent room to provide entertainment while decorating. As various Spotify playlists project into my empty echo chamber of a room, I pay no attention to sound quality as the NAIT spends five full days coming on song before the room is up and running properly again.

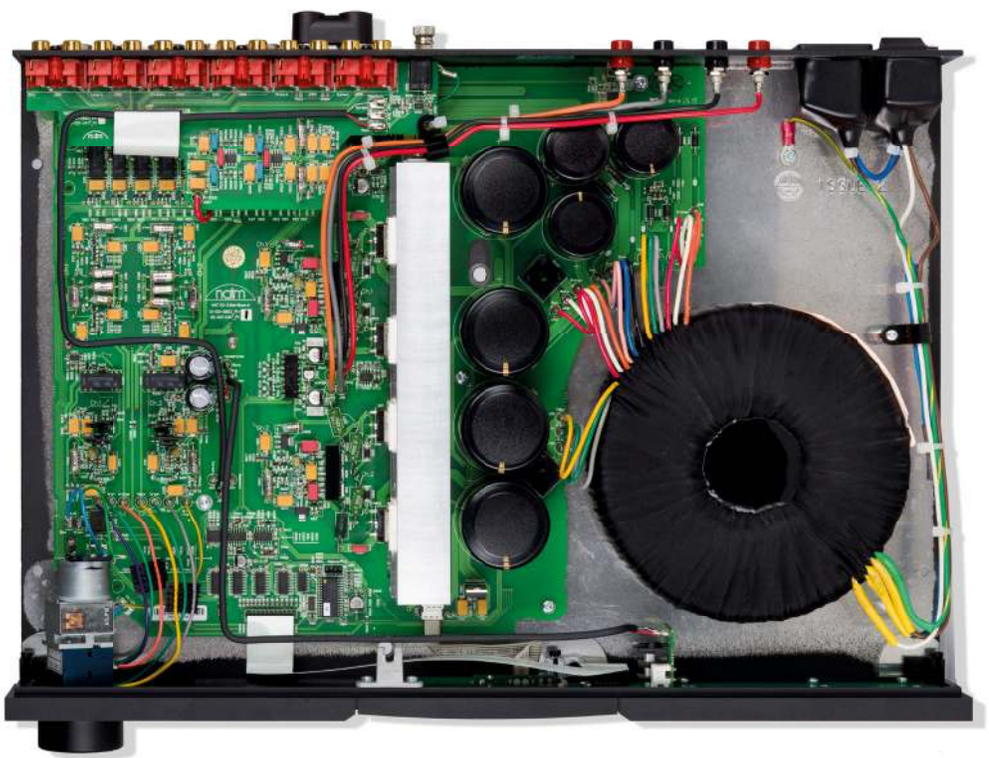
The phono circuit topology comprises three stages: the gain stage, passive equalisation and final gain and active equalisation. This enables excellent noise performance

Spinning my copy of the new Beatles *Abbey Road* remix, I start with Side 2, having previously enjoyed the more full-bodied mix of *Here Comes The Sun* on my reference system. The NAIT loves this sort of track, revelling in the sprightly rhythm and crisply recorded acoustic guitars. With George Harrison's vocal now (thankfully) centrally placed, the NAIT produces a wide yet focused stereo image. It's not quite as holographic as I've heard, however the depth of soundstage is decent.

Naim equipment is known for its exceptional rhythmic pace, and this quality is demonstrated deftly playing *The Barrel* from Aldous Harding's *Designer* album. This track has a robust bottom end that can sound sluggish through weak-kneed amplifiers, yet the NAIT has a firm grasp of the bass, keeping things rolling along masterfully.

Jazz, courtesy of John Coltrane's recently released 1964 session *Blue World,* highlights the NAIT's natural portrayal of timbre, while the amp again takes control to present the music as a coherent whole. Coltrane's fluid saxophone lines on *Traneing In* is accompanied beautifully by McCoy Tyner's nimble piano work and the swinging rhythm section of Jimmy Garrison (bass) and Elvin Jones (drums), providing a thoroughly satisfying musical experience.

Naim's latest version of the NAIT is a solid choice for anyone wanting a no-nonsense, great sounding amplifier. Its 'hi-fi' enough to appeal to audiophile detail seekers but, more importantly, it plays music effortlessly and elegantly. **9**



VERDICT

PROS	CONS
AGILE, RHYTHMIC PERFORMANCE	DEPTH OF SOUNDSTAGE SLIGHTLY LACKING
DETAILED YET MUSICAL SOUND	
EXCELLENT PHONO STAGE	
LOVELY REMOTE CONTROL	
SUPERB BUILD AND FINISH	
CLASSIC NAIM STYLING	

CLOSER

VINYL'S GREATEST FINAL TRACKS

#9 PINK FLOYD
BIKE

The two-wheeling Syd Barrett's lysergic love song closes out Pink Floyd's debut. Gary Tipp moves through the gears

The title of Pink Floyd's debut album, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, was appropriated from chapter seven of charismatic frontman Syd Barrett's favourite children's book, *The Wind In The Willows* by Scottish writer Kenneth Grahame. It's a particularly apposite title given that Barrett's own ultra-playful aesthetic of childlike whimsy underscores the album throughout. Though, funnily enough, all the indicators are that the album's name was brought in right at the last minute to replace the less evocative working title of *Projection*.

Piper… was recorded at Abbey Road studios at the same time some group called The Beatles were working on *Sgt. Pepper* (the Floyd foursome were ushered into the studio to watch the Fabs record *Lovely Rita,* before being *quickly* ushered out again) and was released on 4 August 1967. It remains one of the great psychedelic albums of its era, although, sadly, it would prove to be Barrett's only full record at the band's helm, with his LSD intake escalating during the recording of the album.

Musically, *Piper…* is notable for its astute balance of catchy, short, acid-pop songs (the knicker-nicking *Arnold Layne*, *Lucifer Sam*) with the freaky extended space-rock jams of *Interstellar Overdrive* and *Astronomy Domine*. Barrett has his name on the credits of 10 of the 11 tracks, with Roger Waters' clunky *Take Up Thy Stethoscope And Walk* the only exception.

OFF THE CHAIN

At 3:21, closing track *Bike* lies firmly in the poppy camp. Initially called *The Bike Song,* this dainty hallucinogenic ditty is absurdly simple in its execution, with nursery rhyme-style lyrics that pay little or no attention to the rules of metre and rhyme.

Ostensibly, *Bike* is a love song, not something often associated with the Floyd, with the besotted protagonist offering the girl of his dreams a share of his most prized worldly goods to impress her. These possessions include a bike ("you can ride it if you like"), a cloak ("it's a bit of a joke"), a homeless mouse (called Gerald), and a clan of gingerbread men ("take a couple if you wish").

Each gift is followed by a declaration of affection ("You're the kind of girl that fits in with my world/ I'll give you anything, everything if you want things"), and is said to be written about Barrett's then girlfriend, Jenny Spires – who is also cryptically namechecked, as Jennifer Gentle, on the album's second track, *Lucifer Sam*.

The final display of affection is a room full of musical tunes ("Some rhyme, some ching, most of them are clockwork"), upon which the track transitions into a noisy collage of clocks, gongs, bells and found sounds, all looking to imitate the sound of gears shifting on a bike.

BRAKE LINES

Bike also makes an appearance on no fewer than two Pink Floyd compilation albums: *Relics* (1971) and *Echoes: The Best of Pink Floyd* (2001), and each time it serves as the closing track. Allegedly, *Bike* is pant-soilingly frightening if listened to backwards. ●

Barrett's LSD intake escalated during the recording of the album

ANDREW WHITTUCK/REDFERNS/GETTY

AVID
HIFI
MADE IN THE UK
Sound
Engineering
www.avidhifi.co.uk

DEAD OCEANS JAGJAGUWAR SECRETLY CANADIAN

BON IVER
I,I

★★★★★ THE OBSERVER
★★★★ MOJO
★★★★ EVENING STANDARD
★★★★ THE TIMES
9/10 LOUD & QUIET
9/10 UNCUT

SHARON VAN ETTEN
REMIND ME TOMORROW

★★★★★ EVENING STANDARD
★★★★ THE GUARDIAN
★★★★ DIY
★★★★ NME
★★★★ MOJO
★★★★ Q
★★★★ THE OBSERVER

ANGEL OLSEN
ALL MIRRORS

★★★★ Q
★★★★ MOJO
★★★★ RECORD COLLECTOR
★★★★ EVENING STANDARD
★★★★ THE GUARDIAN
10/10 NME
8/10 UNCUT

BILL FAY
COUNTLESS BRANCHES

NEW ALBUM OUT 17 JANUARY 2020

“WISE, CRYSTALLINE BALLADS”
-THE GUARDIAN

★★★★ MOJO
8/10 UNCUT